

Beating Cheaters

MAX MARCIN



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SAMUEL FRENCH, 25 West 45th Street, New York City
Our New Descriptive Catalogue Sent Free on Request

Cheating Cheaters

A COMIC MELODRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

BY
MAX MARCIN

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"CHEATING CHEATERS"

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The following is a copy of program of the first performance of "CHEATING CHEATERS," as presented at the Eltinge Theatre, New York:

A. H. WOODS

Presents

"CHEATING CHEATERS"

A Comic Melodrama in Four Acts

By MAX MARCIN

Staged by Franklyn Underwood

CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEVE WILSON	<i>Robert McWade</i>
ANTONIO VERDI	<i>Edouard Durand</i>
GEORGE BROCKTON	<i>William Morris</i>
MRS. BROCKTON	<i>Anne Sutherland</i>
NAN CAREY, <i>alias</i> RUTH BROCKTON	<i>Marjorie Rambeau</i>
IRA LAZARRE	<i>Frank Monroe</i>
MRS. PALMER	<i>Winifred Harris</i>
GRACE PALMER	<i>Gypsy O'Brien</i>
TOM PALMER	<i>Cyril Kightley</i>
EDWARD PALMER	<i>Arthur Barry</i>
PHIL PRESTON	<i>William J. Phinney</i>
MYRON T. HANLEY	<i>Fletcher Harvey</i>
HOLMES	<i>William Riley Hatch</i>

ACT I. *The Home of George Brockton.*

ACT II. *The Palmer Home, five miles distant.*

ACT III. *Same as Act I.*

ACT IV. *Office of the National Detective Agency.*

The action takes place in the month of September in one of the suburbs of New York.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

- STEVE WILSON: *A rough-looking, hard-faced man.*
- ANTONIO VERDI, alias TONY THE WOP: *Dressed to suggest an Italian music teacher. Speaks with an Italian accent throughout the play.*
- GEORGE BROCKTON: *About fifty years old, alert and vigorous despite his grey hair.*
- MRS. BROCKTON: *A large, fleshy woman, bleached blonde hair.*
- NAN CAREY, alias RUTH BROCKTON: *She is young, handsome, graceful and becomingly gowned.*
- IRA LAZARRE: *He is a tall thin man, slightly bald, of a very nervous nature and speaks in a thin piping voice that is almost a whine.*
- MRS. PALMER: *An elderly woman.*
- GRACE PALMER: *A girl about Ruth's age.*
- TOM PALMER: *A clean-cut man, about thirty.*
- EDWARD PALMER: *A distinguished-looking gentleman of about fifty.*
- PHIL: *He is a stockily built man of about forty, dressed as a butler.*
- MR. HANLEY: *A very distinguished man, whose grey, pointed beard lends impressiveness to his appearance. He is dressed in correct afternoon attire, a black cutaway coat, black vest, striped trousers sharply creased and black patent leather shoes.*
- HOLMES: *A powerfully built plain-clothes officer.*

Cheating Cheaters

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A spacious room, tastefully furnished, but giving evidence of lack of care, and indifference on the part of the occupants. The Upper Right hand wall is cut off transversely, making a broad doorway R.C., approached by two wide steps. Through the parted curtains overhanging this doorway, a glimpse is obtained of a large conservatory with shrubs and plants. A door L.2 leads into a hallway. Large practical window with seat, curtain and shades at back Centre. Doors at R.1 and L.1.*

On a small stand against wall up R. at foot of step an antique lamp with trap opening into bowl, making a convenient hiding place for the jewels. Standing between the window and door L.2, a baby grand piano. Down L.C. a large settee with sofa pillows. Small chair stands a little to R. of settee. Down R.C. a large round table with small chair at L. and one at back. At R. of table, large armchair. Small chair stands above door down R.

At rise of curtain, the room is untidy. Books are strewn on table and piano. "Police Gazette," torn apart, lies scattered on floor down R. in front of armchair. Cushion against piano leg.

STEVE WILSON, a rough-looking, hard-faced

man in his shirt-sleeves and without collar or necktie, is sitting on window-seat, nervously puffing a cigar, as he cautiously peers through the window. A pistol is seen protruding from his hip pocket.

ANTONIO VERDI, alias TONY THE WOP, is seated back of table down R., finishing a game of solitaire. He has three cards in his hand as the Curtain rises, which he places on the table one after the other; then with an expression of disgust at not beating the game, rises and crosses L. in front of settee. TONY is dressed to suggest an Italian music teacher; speaks with an Italian accent throughout the play. As TONY starts L., GEORGE BROCKTON appears in R.C. doorway. He is about fifty years old, alert and vigorous despite his grey hair. He is comfortably dressed in an old grey sweater, and his eyes are hidden behind a pair of old-fashioned metal-rimmed glasses. He is smoking a pipe and has a book in his hand.

BROCKTON. (*Taking pipe from mouth, crosses to R. of table R.*) Tony, isn't Nan back yet?

VERDI. No, not yet. (*Sits on settee; picks up Italian paper; starts to read.*)

BROCKTON. (*Seeing WILSON peering out of window*) Hold on there, Steve. Why don't you throw open the window and poke your head out? Somebody will be sure to see you then.

WILSON. (*Turning around, moves to C.*) Hm—no bull would expect to find me in a swell joint like this.

BROCKTON. (*Sitting in chair R. of table*) Obviously not, but the *unexpected* is the chief danger of our work.

TONY. (*Looking at WILSON, and snapping finger*

at him) Yes, one mistake—one leetle slip-up—and we are lost.

WILSON. (*Coming down L.C. impatiently; crosses to end of settee*) Well, I'm sick of being cooped up here!

VERDI. (*Leaning toward him*) Half a million dollars' worth of jewels is a prize worth waiting for.

WILSON. (*To VERDI*) That's all right! But when I go after a guy's rocks I take a jimmy and a gun. (*Turning to BROCKTON, sarcastically*) I don't rent no swell house in the country and give a tea party for his family. Those ain't my methods. (*Crosses to c.*)

BROCKTON. (*Rising and coming R.C.; "advisedly"*) Let me tell you something: You keep on with those methods and it won't be long before you're caught. (*Crosses R. in front of table.*)

WILSON. Me get caught? Not a chance! (*Draws gun quickly; swings around, covering first one, then the other*) They'll have a lively time getting me!

BROCKTON. (*Drawing back*) Stop that!

VERDI. (*Still on settee, makes a quick movement to get out of range of pistol*) Hey, hey, stop that! You're absolutely crazy with recklessness.

WILSON. Look at the Ginny hop.

BROCKTON. If you're so fond of showing that gun, why don't you hang it around your neck? (*Calmly sitting R. of table.*)

VERDI. (*Still excited*) And go out in the street shouting what a desperate character you are! (*Wipes face with kerchief.*)

(MRS. BROCKTON, a large, fleshy woman, wearing a faded house wrapper, enters R.C. Her bleached blonde hair, falling in disarray down her shoulders, adds to the general untidyness of her appearance.)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*In doorway*) Say! Has he got that cannon out again?

WILSON. (*Turning toward her, moving up R.C.*) Yes, and when this dog barks he not only shows his teeth but he bites. (*Puts gun back in pocket; moves up L.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Coming down L.C.*) Where's Nan? Ain't she come home yet?

WILSON. (*Coming to her*) No, and I ain't stuck on these long walks she's taking alone every day, either. (*Walks up R.C.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crosses to c.*) Well, if I'd never been mugged for the gallery and wasn't in danger of being picked up every time I set my foot outdoors, I'd be getting a little exercise myself. (*Crosses to chair L. of table; stands back of it.*)

WILSON. (*Comes down back of table*) Listen! Before Nan gets back there's something I want to get off my chest.

BROCKTON. (*Looking up from book he has been reading*) Well, get it off!

WILSON. If the Palmers are coming here to tea this afternoon, now's the time to speak up. (*Very impressively*) I don't believe Nan is going through for us! (*ALL look at WILSON in surprise.*)

BROCKTON. What?

VERDI. (*Rising, crosses up to piano*) Nan throw us down—oh, nonsense!

WILSON. (*With shrug of shoulders*) Maybe not, but I've got a hunch she's stalling us.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Looking at WILSON. Sits L. of table*) Stalling us?

WILSON. Yes. Her fingers may be itching for those Palmer stones, but her heart ain't in the job.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Sarcastically*) What's her heart got to do with it?

WILSON. The dame don't live that won't fall for

the right guy. And the right man has come along for Nan.

BROCKTON. (*Turning to him*) You mean—Tom Palmer?

WILSON. (*Forcibly*) That's who I mean—Tom Palmer. Now, we've staked everything on this job. We're in hock to Lazarre for the coin to plant ourselves in this house and it cost a couple of thousand more to send Nan and George to Europe——

BROCKTON. (*Angrily*) Say, are you still under the delusion that it was a pleasure jaunt? Huh! Less than a fortnight on the other side and the war breaks out! (*VERDI crosses to chair R. of settee and sits.*) And after we manage to squeeze on board a ship for home, the confounded ship strikes a mine—oh, it was a lovely excursion!

WILSON. (*Emphatically*) That's the point I'm leading up to. When that ocean buggy hit that mine and she saw the man she started out to trim standing on that sinking ship, lifting the women and children into the lifeboats. Well, she stopped looking on him as a fall guy—he became her hero!

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Turns away, waving her hand*) Oh, pshaw!

WILSON. (*Excitedly leaning across table*) If you think I'm wrong, why has she been playing around with him all this time? Why?

BROCKTON. (*Turning to him*) She's leading him on.

WILSON. Leading him on? (*Moves up R.C. a few steps.*)

BROCKTON. Yes, leading him on. Can't you get that through that mushhead of yours?

WILSON. (*Coming down c.*) It looks to me like she was hanging on. And when a girl is in love with a guy and wants to hang onto him, she puts her hand on his shoulder, not in his pocket.

MRS. BROCKTON. Pshaw! Many a dame has put

one hand on a man's shoulder while lifting his watch with the other.

WILSON. (*Still c.*) Let me put you wise to something! When Lazarre sent for me five months ago, he says, "Steve, there's a high-class mob planted on a job in the suburbs, and they want an expert safe man. They're framing it to get on the inside, and they want you to blow the safe." I told him I never worked with no high-class mob before, but half a million's worth of sparklers listened good to me, so I traveled along. (*Pauses; looks them all over. Crosses back of R. table*) But I want to declare myself right now! I hope I'm wrong about Nan——

BROCKTON. You bet you are.

WILSON. (*Threateningly*) But either way, I'm going through with this job and I'm going to make sure that all of you go through with me. (*Looks searchingly at each one, finishing with BROCKTON*) Including Nan!

BROCKTON. (*Alarmed at his attitude*) What do you mean?

WILSON. This job is going to be pulled off, whether Nan wants it or not, and if she makes one false move before them Palmers——(*Door SLAM off L.2.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Here's Nan now.

WILSON. *Ssh!* Here she is!

VERDI. (*Goes quickly to L.2 door; looks into hall; closes door*) Yes—— (*Crosses to back of settee.*)

WILSON. (*Warningly*) Not a word to her! Let's see what happens this afternoon. (*Goes up R.*)

(NAN CAREY, *alias* RUTH BROCKTON, enters at L.2; she is young, handsome, graceful and becomingly gowned; her arms are loaded down with a pile of freshly cut flowers.)

RUTH. Hello, everybody! (BROCKTON and VERDI acknowledge greeting.)

MRS. BROCKTON. Hello, Nan! What are you made up for?

RUTH. (*Coming down L.C.*) For your nineteen-year-old daughter, of course.

MRS. BROCKTON. You can't pull that on us, Nan.

RUTH. And for pity's sake, don't call me Nan. From now on, I'm Ruth—Ruth Brockton, George's daughter—the same as on the boat. (*Crosses and lays flowers on the piano*) Wouldn't it be lovely if the Palmers on their first visit heard one of you call me Nan? (*Crosses down R. of chair R. of settee*) And from now on you're supposed to be my mother! Now, don't forget that, Nellie.

MRS. BROCKTON. Yes, Ruth.

RUTH. And now, help me get this room into shape.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Rises, picks up cards around table, puts them on table, and crosses to piano*) It certainly needs it.

VERDI. (*Arranges pillows on settee. To BROCKTON*) George, pick up those papers! (BROCKTON picks up *Police Gazette* and puts it under cushion of armchair.) Steve, put those flowers in that vase. (*Indicating vase on steps R.C. STEVE takes vase to piano and arranges flowers. RUTH turns and sees pipe in BROCKTON's mouth. Crosses to L. of table*) George, for heaven's sake, put away that pipe.

BROCKTON. (*R. of table. Puts pipe down in ash tray*) All right, Nan!

RUTH. There you go. Nan, again! And there's no excuse for you, George, after having been my father all the way to Europe and back.

BROCKTON. I'll rememer, *Ruth!*

RUTH. (*Takes a quiet survey of room, which has taken on a brighter and more cheerful aspect. Crosses to c.*) There—that's better! Now, boys,

come here! (*All gather around her*—RUTH C.—BROCKTON R.—WILSON L.—MRS. BROCKTON *in back of settee*; VERDI *front of it*.) Now, don't forget this, whether we get those Palmer jewels or not depends upon our cleverness this afternoon. All I want is one night in the Palmer home, and the way we have it framed, I ought to get the invitation before they leave. Do you all know what to do when they get there? (*Crosses to piano, fixes flowers in vase, picks up cushion, putting it in window seat. ALL imply they know what to do.*) Don't you think we had better go over it again?

BROCKTON. (*Crosses below table; sits R. of it*) You needn't go through it again for my sake.

VERDI. (*Crosses down L.*) Nor for mine.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crosses down L.C. Standing R. of chair R. of settee*) I always was a lady before company.

WILSON. (*Standing down L.C.*) Ha! (*RUTH crosses to table R.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. What's the matter with you?

WILSON. (*Laughing*) Imagine Nell serving tea to the Palmers—ha!

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Angrily*) Ha! Are you afraid I'm to make a break? (*Proudly*) I'll have you know I've been hostess at many a tea party. (*VERDI crosses to piano. RUTH sits back of table.*)

WILSON. (*Sarcastically*) Yes, but there's always been plenty of bartenders to do the serving. (*Crosses to chair R. of settee; sits.* MRS. BROCKTON *drops to settee.*)

RUTH. Now, boys, don't forget your parts for this afternoon's party. George, you're my father; Nellie—(*MRS. BROCKTON lies on settee.*)—you're my mother; Tony, you're supposed to be my music teacher, and Steve, you're our new butler; and when for heaven's sake, you announce the Palmers,

don't bawl the name out as though you felt your lungs needed exercise.

WILSON. Gee, that's a swell job! Head usher for a gang of crooks! I ought to write home and tell the folks how well I'm doing.

BROCKTON. Well, let's see how well you are doing. Now, imagine you are showing in the visitors. Let's hear you announce them.

RUTH. Yes, go ahead, Steve. Something tells me you need more practice. (WILSON rises; crosses to piano.) Now imagine I'm playing the piano. (Pantomimes playing on the table.)

WILSON. (Pushing VERDI out of the way) Get out of the way.

VERDI. What's the matter with you?

WILSON. (Comes forward deferentially and bawls out) Mrs. Palmer!

RUTH. (Putting cards down. Rising) Where do you think you are?

BROCKTON. (Shaking his head) That voice never belonged to any butler.

MRS. BROCKTON. (Straightens up) You're not announcing a prize fight. (VERDI throws up his hands in despair.)

RUTH. Try it again! (Sits.)

WILSON. (Circles around chair, comes down to L. of table again, in a very dignified manner and in a softer tone announces) Mrs. Palmer!

RUTH. That is better.

VERDI. Very much better indeed. (WILSON looks at VERDI as if he would like to strangle him. VERDI makes funny movement of arm.)

RUTH. (Taking telegram from dress) Now, Steve, here's the telegram I've prepared. (Gives WILSON telegram) You know when to spring it, don't you?

WILSON. After tea has been served.

RUTH. That's right. George, you're to read the

telegram—and don't pass it around to be examined—if they even suspect it's phoney— (*Rises. Shrugs shoulders*) Well, we might as well pack up and get out. (*Goes around to L. of table.*)

BROCKTON. (*Taking keys from pocket*) Oh, Ruth! Here are the skeleton keys. You may need them when you get over to the house. (*Gives keys to RUTH. She sits L. of table.*)

WILSON. (*Up c. Putting on collar*) We're a hell of a gang to give a tea party!

RUTH. Why the profanity?

BROCKTON. (*Looking up at WILSON*) Remember that even a burglar may be a gentleman.

WILSON. Hm! Good manners don't crack no cribs.

BROCKTON. (*Bowing to him in acknowledgment*) Yes, unfortunately, even good manners have their limitations. (*The DOORBELL rings; two short rings and one long one. ALL rise and stand tensely at attention. The RING is repeated.*)

RUTH. That's Lazarre's ring. (*To VERDI*) Let him in.

(*VERDI exits L.2, leaving door open. MRS. BROCKTON crosses up L.C.*)

WILSON. (*Crosses down c.*) Lazarre—what the devil did he come up here for? (*Goes to window and looks out.*)

RUTH. I sent him word that we had to have more money.

BROCKTON. (*Impatiently*) If anyone has trailed him up here, we're done for.

WILSON. (*At window*) Thank Heaven, there's no one in sight.

RUTH. (*Crosses to back of settee*) I asked him to send the money, not to bring it.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crosses down c.*) That's the

worst of having a backer; he's always scared somebody is holding out on him.

RUTH. (*Turning to her*) Nellie, you had better get into your clothes.

WILSON. (*Up c.*) Yes, Mother; go upstairs and improve your figure.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crossing up*) This figure don't need improving. It needs remodeling. I'll be decked out like a circus horse in no time. (*Exits R.C.*)

(IRA LAZARRE enters hurriedly L.2. *He is a tall thin man, slightly bald, of a very nervous nature and speaks in a thin piping voice that is almost a whine.*)

LAZARRE. (*Hat in hand, he comes quickly down c., bowing. WILSON crosses to chair R. of settee. RUTH comes down L. of WILSON.*) Good afternoon, Miss Brockton. (*Turning to BROCKTON*) Ah, George, you're looking well! (*Sees books scattered on table*) My! My! Plenty of books, eh, George? You must have been visiting the Public Library again. The first time I defended George—(*Turning to RUTH*)—it was for furnishing his shelves from the Public Library. (*BROCKTON shaking his head disgustedly. Crosses up R.C. to steps. IRA turns to him laughingly*) You see, George, I have a good memory.

BROCKTON. (*In doorway R.C. Sarcastically*) Ira, if your legal knowledge was as good as your memory, you'd be a regular lawyer. (*Exits R.C.*)

LAZARRE. (*A little embarrassed, turning to RUTH*) I received your letter, Miss Brockton.

RUTH. (*Coming c.*) Sit down, please. (*Indicating chair R. of table. IRA crosses in front of table. WILSON drops into chair L.C. LAZARRE sits R. of table. RUTH L. of table*) Have you brought the money?

LAZARRE. (*Evasively*) I'm afraid I have some bad news—very bad news, Miss Carey. (RUTH and WILSON give startled looks.)

RUTH. Bad news?

LAZARRE. Spider Webb was convicted yesterday. (*Shaking his head mournfully*) And I had such a beautiful alibi for him.

WILSON. (*Gruffly*) Well, wasn't you his lawyer?

LAZARRE. Yes, but even *I* couldn't save him. (*Impressively*) Had he been a ten thousand dollar client I couldn't have been more eloquent or wept more tears before that jury. Now he's in for four years and all my witnesses are under arrest for perjury. (RUTH and WILSON again exchange startled looks.) My! My! Times are awfully bad!

RUTH. (*Leaning across the table*) Is that to let us know we can't have the money?

LAZARRE. (*Shaking his head mournfully*) Three thousand dollars is a lot of money to advance just now.

RUTH. But think of the profits!

LAZARRE. I know, but you have already had four thousand dollars.

RUTH. (*Impatiently*) If you want an accounting, I'll give you one. There's the renting of this house, the hiring of the furniture—the trip to Europe for George and me——

LAZARRE. You know, Miss Carey, I never pry into what my clients do with their money.

RUTH. (*Sarcastically*) Yes; the less you know, the safer it is for you. And you always play safe, don't you? (RUTH and WILSON exchange knowing looks.)

LAZARRE. (*Whiningly*) I'm afraid the game is no longer safe for any of us.

WILSON. (*Gruffly*) Not even for you, eh?

LAZARRE. Look what happened to poor Spider! The police would have *sprung* him for me in a min-

ute, but even their hands were tied. That detective, Ferris—— (*Rises.*)

WILSON. (*Jumps up; crosses to c.*) Ferris?

RUTH. (*With sudden interest*) Ferris?

LAZARRE. Yes, damn him! Ferris worked up the case against him, and what do you think one of their operatives had the nerve to say to me?

RUTH. I don't know. What?

LAZARRE. I was cross-examining him when he answered back that I was worse than a crook—that I was a backer and maker of crooks. (*Puts right hand in lower right pocket.*)

RUTH. (*With a knowing smile and nod to WILSON*) A vile slander, wasn't it?

LAZARRE. (*Takes a small round black object from his pocket*) And look at this!

WILSON. (*Coming c. excitedly. RUTH rises*) A Dick—!

LAZARRE. Yes, a dictograph!

RUTH. Where did you find it?

LAZARRE. Planted in my office by one of Ferris's men. Fortunately, I discovered it before any harm was done. But you see how insecure everything is. (*Puts the dictograph into his pocket. Turns and takes a few steps R.*)

RUTH. (*Looks at WILSON, winks, points to lamp; nods*) All right—if you want security—— (*RUTH goes to lamp up R.C., opens door and takes out case containing jewels.*)

WILSON. (*Crossing to front of settee*) Sure, a bunch of it!

RUTH. (*Coming down back of table and opening case*) Would these satisfy you? The Stuyvesant jewels?

LAZARRE. (*R. of table, looking greedily at jewels*) The Stuyvesant jewels!

RUTH. Yes, and they're all there, except what

Nell is wearing. Do you want to hold them as collateral until it is safe to market them?

LAZARRE. Will it ever be safe to market them?

WILSON. Sure. The bulls ain't going to devote all their lives to this one job. (*RUTH extends jewels to LAZARRE.*)

LAZARRE. Oh, no! You are very clever, Miss Carey. Now, were I to take them it would leave you clean and me with the goods. And now that Ferris handles the business for all the burglary insurance companies, he will never give up the search for them.

RUTH. (*Closing jewel case*) Let me understand you. You mean you're not going to advance us the three thousand dollars——

LAZARRE. (*Anxiously*) Why do you need so much?

RUTH. (*Emphatically*) You know that we don't dare market any of these stones in this country, and the war kills any chance of disposing of them in Europe; and we will be in the same fix with the Palmer jewels! Now, we've got to have getaway money, and we're not going to wait for it until after the job. Either we get that money now, or I quit.

LAZARRE. Now, Miss Carey, remember you have already had four thousand dollars. I only mean to suggest that this Ferris—has made it so dangerous for all of us that—er—that—well, *something* ought to be done. (*Leaning over table in suggestive manner*) Now, if he were suddenly to disappear—you understand?

RUTH. (*Exchanges looks with WILSON*) Yes, we understand. You want us to get Ferris before Ferris gets you? (*Crosses to chair L. of table R.; sits.*)

LAZARRE. (*Turning and taking step down R.*) I am only warning you of your danger.

RUTH. (*Sneeringly*) Of course, you wouldn't be

guilty of complicity in putting Ferris out of the way!

LAZARRE. (*Coming back to table excitedly*) That isn't the question. I'm simply trying to tell you—

RUTH. (*Impatiently bringing hand down on table with force*) Getting down to business. *Where* is he?

LAZARRE. Ah, that is the point—where is he? The rat keeps himself invisible—he directs his agents, but never appears on the scene himself. But—a big job like getting the Palmer jewels ought to bring him personally on the ground, and if he should take charge himself—— (*Leans over table and looks at WILSON.*)

WILSON. Listen—leave him to me.

RUTH. (*Lightly, with a nod toward WILSON*) Oh, yes! Leave him to him!

LAZARRE. (*With a sigh of relief*) Ah, I thought so! (*Then as afterthought*) Now, of course, I am not suggesting what you are to do——

RUTH. We understand perfectly—you always play safe. (*Rises*) Have you got the money? (*WILSON rises; crosses to back of table.*)

LAZARRE. (*With satisfied air of relief, now rises and taking wallet from pocket, takes out money. RUTH rises.*) Ah, yes—here it is—three thousand dollars in large bills—— (*Hands money to RUTH.*)

RUTH. Thank you. (*Takes money and counts it. WILSON shows satisfaction; goes up c. to window.*)

LAZARRE. You are a clever girl, Miss Carey. You understand—and I leave it all to you—and Wilson.

RUTH. Thank you. You always do leave it to someone else.

VERDI. (*Enters L.2*) Excuse me! But I saw the Palmer car at the top of the hill. It is coming this way—— (*AUTO HORN heard in the distance.*)

LAZARRE. (*Going above table toward L.2*) Your visitors? I shall be going.

RUTH. (*Stops him; points to R.C.*) That way is safer. You can cut through the garden. Tony will show you the way.

LAZARRE. Goodbye and good luck! (*Exits R.C., followed by VERDI.* RUTH crosses, puts money and jewels into lamp, comes back of table and arranges books and so on.)

WILSON. (*At window*) Yes, here they come! In a swell car! (*Comes down back of RUTH*) There's something I want to say to you!

RUTH. Yes?

WILSON. If this frame-up goes through, and you're invited to that house, you'll be under the same roof with that Tom Palmer.

RUTH. And all the Palmer jewels. Don't forget the jewels.

WILSON. I ain't forgetting them, but you want to be almighty sure that you don't, either.

RUTH. (*Turning to him sharply*) What do you mean?

WILSON. There's bigger game than diamonds to be played for——

RUTH. Bigger game?

WILSON. Yes, the biggest game of all—the man!

RUTH. (*Trying to laugh it off and crossing down L.*) I play for a man? Don't be absurd.

WILSON. (*Following her*) Oh, you're clever enough! You're altogether too *damned* clever!

RUTH. (*L.C., turning to him*) Besides, he doesn't want me.

WILSON. (*Looking her in the eyes*) I *hope* not, because somebody's going to be disappointed!

RUTH. What are you hinting? What do you mean?

WILSON. (*Fiercely*) Just this: If you get into that house and that glib-tongued Lothario makes love to you—grab the stones and grab them quick! Because you'll never get *him*! *I'll get him first!*

(Makes quick movement to hip pocket as if to draw gun. RUTH, showing that he has affected her, quickly grasps his left arm with her right hand. She is about to speak as VERDI enters excitedly from R.C.)

VERDI. The Palmers! *(Goes to window and looks out. AUTO HORN is heard drawing nearer.)*

WILSON. *(Turning to VERDI)* All right! All right! *(To RUTH)* I said all I got to say! *(Exits L.2. RUTH stands staring after WILSON.)*

VERDI. *(At window)* They are coming round the bend.

RUTH. All right—I'll be started before they get here. *(Goes up to piano; selects music she is going to play)* Where are they now?

VERDI. Coming this way. Better begin to play—*(AUTO effect nearer.)*

RUTH. I'm ready. *(Sits at piano and begins to play softly. AUTO very near.)*

VERDI. *(Still at window)* They are entering the gate. *(Comes down back of her and starts beating time with finger. STOP AUTO.)* Fortissimo! Fortissimo! *(RUTH plays rapidly and loud, while VERDI stands at one side, beating time. Music continues long enough to enable visitors to get out of their automobile.)*

(WILSON enters L.2. He is dressed as a butler and looks and acts the part of a menial. He leaves door open and comes down L. above settee. MRS. PALMER enters—an elderly woman—followed by GRACE PALMER, a girl about RUTH's age, and TOM PALMER, a clean-cut man, about thirty. When they are well on.)

WILSON. *(Announces)* Mrs. Palmer!

RUTH. *(Rises and comes c.)* Oh, Mrs. Palmer! I'm awfully glad you came. *(Shakes hands)* Won't

you sit down? (MRS. PALMER crosses R.; sits in chair L. of table. RUTH turns and shakes hands with GRACE. WILSON exits L.2.) How are you, Grace?

GRACE. Splendid, thank you. (Crosses L. behind table and down extreme R.)

RUTH. (Coming L.C. to TOM and shaking hands) And you? How are you?

TOM. (Pressing her hand) Fine!

RUTH. (Turning to MRS. PALMER) But where is Mr. Palmer?

MRS. PALMER. He was so sorry not to be able to come, but he had to go into town on business. (TOM comes down L.C. to front of settee.)

RUTH. Oh! I'm so sorry! (Turning to VERDI, who is standing up near piano) Oh—let me introduce my music teacher, Professor Verdi. (VERDI comes down c.) Professor, this is Mrs. Palmer. (He bows profoundly.) Miss Palmer.

VERDI. (Still bowing) Delighted!

RUTH. (Turning to TOM) Tom Palmer!

VERDI. (Crosses L.; shakes hands with TOM) How do you do, sir?

GRACE. We heard you as we entered the gate. I never knew, my dear, you could play so well.

RUTH. (Pointing to VERDI) I have a very capable teacher.

VERDI. (Turning with profound bow) Thank you. (Bowing to OTHERS) Thank you—thank you. (To RUTH, very impressively) Now, if you will remember not to slur in the andante and work gradually into the fortissimo, giving full expression to the arpeggio, you will produce a grand finale and we will be a great success at the concert. (VERDI bows elaborately.)

MRS. PALMER. (Surprised) Concert?

VERDI. (Proudly) At my studio—a private con-

cert by my pupils. Miss Brockton is what you call—er—— (*Touching forehead as if trying to remember*) Ah, yes—my star pupil.

TOM. When does the concert come off?

VERDI. Thursday evening.

GRACE. As soon as that?

VERDI. That is why Senorita Brockton, she has much practice to do. Oh, here is Mr. Brockton. (*Pats RUTH on shoulder; goes R. behind table.*)

BROCKTON. (*Enters; pauses a moment in doorway, R.C. The clothes he has on are in sharp contrast to the ones he was last seen in. He has on a black frock coat, striped trousers, scrupulously creased, patent leather shoes, and a flower in his buttonhole. He also wears a monocle in his eye. He comes down R. to front of table*) How do you do, Mrs. Palmer? (*MRS. PALMER rises and shakes hands.*) This is awfully good of you to come over. (*Turns to GRACE and shakes hands*) Glad to see you again, Miss Palmer. (*Crosses L. to TOM; shakes hands*) How are you, sir?

TOM. Splendid, thank you.

RUTH. Where is Mother? Mother wanted to ask you——

BROCKTON. She'll be down in a moment. (*TOM joins RUTH, who has moved up C. near piano.*)

MRS. PALMER. (*Crossing to BROCKTON, L.C.*) Really, Mr. Brockton, how did you ever manage to get your place so well arranged in so short a time? Why, you've only been here— How long is it?

TOM. (*Up C.*) A month tomorrow——

GRACE. (*Down R. VERDI crosses to R. of GRACE*) Leave it to Brother Tom to keep tabs.

BROCKTON. (*Moving over to MRS. PALMER*) You know, we took the house before Ruth and I sailed. And Mother, not sailing with us, enabled her to look after the furnishings.

(MRS. BROCKTON appears in the doorway R.C., standing between the parted curtains. She offers a sharp contrast to the loosely dressed, untidy woman seen before. Her blond hair is now hidden beneath a gray wig that imparts to her the appearance of a charming, refined elderly mother. She is stunningly dressed in a black satin afternoon gown, and conspicuous at her throat is a large pearl necklace. As she stands smoothing down the wig with her hands, each movement of her fingers is accompanied by the shimmer of jewels.)

BROCKTON. Ah! Here's Mother now! (*Crosses to settee.* MRS. BROCKTON comes down R.C. RUTH crosses her forward.)

RUTH. Mrs. Palmer, allow me to present my mother. (MRS. PALMER is L.C.) Miss Grace Palmer— (*GRACE is down R. They acknowledge introductions.* RUTH turns to TOM, who is up R.C.) And this is Tom Palmer.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Shaking hands.* TOM comes down to L. of MRS. BROCKTON) So this is the Tom Palmer?

TOM. (*Laughingly looking toward RUTH*) I hope there hasn't been another one coming around.

MRS. BROCKTON. Real live heroes are scarce.

TOM. (*Pointing to BROCKTON.* GRACE sits R. of table. MRS. PALMER crosses to back of table; sits.) There's one.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*In surprise*) He—a—hero?

TOM. I never saw a cooler man when he was needed.

BROCKTON. (*In front of settee*) Oh! I wasn't so cool, but seeing you—

TOM. (*Laughingly*) When that ship struck that mine, believe me I wasn't so cool, either. (*Joins*

RUTH *up* C. MRS. BROCKTON *crosses to L. of table; sits.*)

MRS. PALMER. (*To* MRS. BROCKTON) You were fortunate in remaining at home and missing it.

BROCKTON. Yes, Mother missed the excitement, but she always did hate the water. (*Crosses to back of settee.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Oh, I just despise the ocean—it's the only thing that has kept me from going abroad.

(WILSON *enters* L.2, *awkwardly pushing the tea cart, loaded with dishes.* WILSON *starts down* C. *with* cart. BROCKTON *attracts his attention and signals him to be careful.* WILSON *turns his head toward* BROCKTON *and nods to him; as he does so he bumps cart into* TOM, *who is standing talking to* RUTH *up* C. *near piano, with his back to* WILSON. WILSON, *starting down* C. *with* cart, *turns to excuse himself to* TOM, *and runs into* L. *of* chair *in which* MRS. BROCKTON *is sitting.*)

BROCKTON *and* MRS. BROCKTON. (*Sternly*) Wilson! (*Indicating* L. *side of her chair.* WILSON *places* cart, *stands back of table, puts his hands in his trouser pockets, then remembering what he is supposed to be, draws himself up awkwardly and stands at attention.* VERDI *makes pantomime to* WILSON *to stand like a butler.*)

RUTH. (*Coming down to* MRS. BROCKTON) Mother, can I help you?

MRS. BROCKTON. If you please, dear.

RUTH. (*Taking cup and saucer from* MRS. BROCKTON *as she finishes filling it*) Mrs. Palmer, will you have lemon or cream?

MRS. PALMER. Lemon, if you please.

RUTH. And you, Grace? (*Taking second cup from MRS. BROCKTON.*)

GRACE. The same, dear. (*RUTH puts slice of lemon in each cup as she finishes. WILSON steps forward with extended hands to take them, when VERDI, coming from around R. between MRS. PALMER and GRACE, steps in between RUTH and WILSON, saying:*)

VERDI. Permit me—permit me, Senorita? (*Takes tea, goes back around table, serves to MRS. PALMER and GRACE. WILSON very angrily draws himself up and is about to declare himself when RUTH knocks him with elbow.*)

RUTH. Wilson—you may pass the cake! (*TOM and BROCKTON stand talking behind settee. WILSON takes cake from cart, starts L. toward TOM and BROCKTON, then hesitates, shakes his head wisely, smiles, goes back around table and comes down toward MRS. PALMER; is just about to pass cake to her when VERDI turns and takes cake from him. WILSON gives VERDI a nasty look. Stops; looks at him. VERDI serves cake to MRS. PALMER and GRACE; crosses up; talks to WILSON.*)

RUTH. (*To TOM*) How will you have yours?

TOM. Straight.

RUTH. (*Smiling*) Oh! But this is tea.

TOM. (*Crosses to L. of RUTH. Laughingly*) Oh, I beg your pardon. A little lemon, please. (*BROCKTON crosses to front of settee.*)

RUTH. (*Fixing tea*) Lemon for you, Father?

BROCKTON. Yes, dear. (*TOM takes the two cups from RUTH; goes L.; gives one to BROCKTON, who sits on settee. RUTH takes cup for herself and sits in chair R. of settee. TOM, coming L.C. beside her, sits on arm of settee. VERDI has given the plate back to WILSON, who sulkily comes around to tea cart and noisily slams plate down on cart.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Giving him a warning look*)

That will do, Wilson! (WILSON *draws himself up; gives VERDI an indignant look as if to say, "You're to blame for that."* WILSON *crosses up to piano and leans on it and begins to put foot on imaginary foot-rail.* MRS. BROCKTON *turns, seeing WILSON's business at piano; mutters, "Dear, dear."*) A new man. I don't think he has had much experience. (WILSON *gives her a disgusted look and starts for exit L.2.*)

MRS. PALMER. One can't be too careful in the selection of servants these days. (WILSON *starts for MRS. PALMER in a threatening manner, when he catches the warning look from VERDI; crosses to door. As he reaches it:*)

RUTH. Yes, Mrs. Palmer, you're quite right. The average servant is absolutely brainless. (WILSON *gives her an indignant look, mumbling, and quickly exits L.2.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Do you know, this doesn't seem like a first meeting at all to me. It's more like renewing an old acquaintance. I've heard so much of you. In fact, all Ruth has spoken about since she got back has been of her friends, the Palmers.

MRS. PALMER. I'm sure that's very kind of her.

MRS. BROCKTON. And I shall always be thankful to the good fortune that placed Ruth and my husband at the same table with you.

MRS. PALMER. (*Lightly*) Then you should thank the Purser.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*With puzzled look*) The—Purser?

GRACE. Oh! He got his reward—five pounds! (MRS. BROCKTON *and RUTH look quickly to BROCKTON, who has his teacup raised to his lips and is just about to drink. He pauses, lowers cup and looks at GRACE.*)

BROCKTON. Who paid five pounds?

GRACE. (*Leaning forward*) Why, the Purser

told us that you paid him five pounds for a seat at our table.

BROCKTON. (*Annoyed*) Did he tell you that?

RUTH. Why—Father—you never told me!

BROCKTON. (*Embarrassed*) Well—er—you see—ahem—it was this way—I didn't like the people at our table.

TOM. I'm glad of that.

RUTH. (*To TOM*) No more than you liked the people at your table.

TOM. (*Looking around in embarrassment*) Why—what do you mean?

RUTH. You see, when Father and I decided to move to another table, we looked around the saloon and Father said, "Why, there are those nice-looking people we saw on the train to Cherbourg." And I said, "Yes, how nice it would be if we could sit at their table." (*Looking at TOM. VERDI takes cups from GRACE and MRS. PALMER, puts them on tray and returns to former position.*) You see, I wanted to know you—(*TOM leans forward with pleased expression*)—all of you. (*TOM straightens up; looks disappointed.*)

GRACE. Why, isn't that strange? That's just what Tom said when he saw you on the train—that he wanted to know you—all of you.

RUTH. But when we asked the Purser for a seat next to you he said he guessed it would be all right, seeing as you had paid him five pounds for a seat next to us.

TOM. (*Confused*) Well, I—I—yes—yes—you see. (*Turns to MRS. PALMER as if for help. Takes cup from RUTH, crosses and puts cup on wagon.*)

BROCKTON. (*Now at ease. Rises*) Why, this is quite remarkable—ahem—well, sort of mutual attraction— (*By this time they have all finished tea. BROCKTON gives VERDI signal to get the PALMER ladies out of the room so TOM and RUTH can*

be alone. VERDI *nods in answer*. MRS. BROCKTON *rings small bell on tea cart for WILSON.*)

VERDI. Ah, yes, a mutual attraction—but we have another attraction—the view from the porch is simply magnifique! On a clear day like this you can see above the trees, across the fields—so far as you can see the housetops of the big city. (*During speech BROCKTON has moved back of settee and crossed R. to foot of steps, placing his teacup on tea table as he passes. WILSON enters L.2 and takes tea cart; starts toward door L.2; turns, listening to VERDI; smiles and catches BROCKTON'S eye; shakes his head and exits L.2.*)

GRACE. (*With interest, rising*) Really?

VERDI. Ah! It is wonderful! You must let me show you. (*Offering GRACE his arm*) I shall be honored! (*To MRS. PALMER*) Will you not come too, Madam? (*VERDI offers MRS. PALMER his other arm. She rises, takes his arm and they start for R.C. BROCKTON drops down back of table, and touching MRS. BROCKTON on arm, nods toward R.C. and crosses back to foot of steps. She rises and crosses toward R.C. TOM, in the meantime, has dropped down and is sitting on arm of settee, facing RUTH.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. I suggest that we all go on the porch.

BROCKTON. All right, Mother. That's a very good idea. (*MRS. PALMER, GRACE and VERDI, MRS. and MR. BROCKTON exit R.C., he turing, as he exits, to RUTH and TOM with a satisfied look. TOM and RUTH continue to talk in dumb show until OTHERS are well off.*)

RUTH. (*Rising and turning toward R.C.*) Don't you think we had better join the others?

TOM. (*Rising and coming around to her R.*) No! (*He looks into her eyes. They BOTH laugh.*) Not until I've had a moment alone with you! Do you

know, I haven't seen you for a *whole week?* (*Takes her hand.*)

RUTH. (*Looking up at him*) A *whole week?* My, is it as long as that?

TOM. You're looking wonderful, but you haven't said you're glad to see me.

RUTH. (*Crosses to settee; sits*) I thought you took that for granted.

TOM. (*Following her; sits*) I never take anything for granted.

RUTH. Very well. How do you do?

TOM. Fine, thank you. (*Gives him her hand and both laugh.*)

RUTH. I *am* glad to see you.

TOM. (*Laughingly*) That's better! That's a whole lot better. (*He feels the large solitaire on her finger and examines it carefully and admiringly.*) Hello—hello! What a marvelous ring! By George, that's a beauty! Why, that fellow is a perfect three carat! I never saw him before.

RUTH. (*Playfully*) All the jewels in the world aren't in the Palmer collection, you know.

TOM. It's wonderful!

RUTH. Yes. I think it's rather pretty. Father gave it to me on my birthday. (*Taking her hand away*) Do you know, with all your love for them, I've never seen you wear a jewel of any kind?

TOM. I hate display in a man.

RUTH. Why do you collect them?

TOM. For the same reason that other men collect wonderful paintings and beautiful statuary and rare pottery. You see, you really learn to know and understand precious stones; you discover in them all the crystallized beauty of the world.

RUTH. (*Leaning toward him*) Tell me some more about your collection. Remember, you were giving me the history of that wonderful necklace?

TOM. Yes; we were getting real chummy for the

first time when we hit that damn—that confounded mine——

RUTH. But speaking of jewels—have you added to the collection since you got back?

TOM. I haven't even looked at it. I haven't thought about anything or anybody—(*Looks longingly at her*)—*but you!*

RUTH. (*Embarrassed, rises and crosses c.*) And thinking of me—and all the incidents of the voyage, didn't you wonder why Father should have paid the Purser five pounds for a seat next to you?

TOM. (*Following her*) Not at all. Anything to get away from those long-bearded Russians. I couldn't have stood them myself.

RUTH. You couldn't—but you did—you paid the Purser five pounds for a seat next to us.

TOM. Because I wanted to meet *you*. Why, I wanted to know you from the very moment our eyes met across the seat of that railroad car on the way to Cherbourg. Ruth, I——

RUTH. (*Turns away, trying to change subject*) Hadn't we better join the others? (*Crosses to chair back of table.*)

TOM. (*Advances ardently to L. of RUTH*) Just a moment, Ruth. After all the things I said to you—you remember as we sat on deck with the moonlight on the water.

RUTH. The things a man says under the influence of the moonlight on the water are best forgotten.

TOM. Ruth, don't you care a little? Haven't my words meant anything?

RUTH. A man's words mean so little.

TOM. Mine don't begin to express how *much* I care.

RUTH. (*Turning toward him*) A man never really knows.

TOM. Yes, he does. When he hungers for the

presence of a woman—when he thrills at the mere touch of her hand—when a wisp of her hair brushing his cheek sets his blood tingling, he knows he has met the one woman in the world for him.

RUTH. (*Looking up into his eyes*) She always is the one woman in the world—(*Turns away, crosses down and sits on arm of chair R.*)—at the time.

TOM. (*Following RUTH*) Ruth, do you know—sometimes I seem to feel that you're merely playing with me? (*Tries to kiss her. She moves her head away each time.*)

RUTH. (*Turning to him, looking into his eyes searchingly, her hand falling on his arm*) No, I'm not playing with you. Really, I'm not. (*Rises*) Oh—sometimes I wonder if you're really sincere?

TOM. (*Leaning across armchair toward her*) I—sincere? If there were only some way of proving it! Test me—test me any way you wish!

RUTH. (*Turning to him*) No, I don't want to, really—disappointments are always costly to a woman—— (*GRACE, VERDI, MRS. PALMER, MR. and MRS. BROCKTON enter R.C. GRACE and VERDI stop upstage near piano. MRS. PALMER crosses down L.C. BROCKTON C. MRS. BROCKTON to chair L. of table.*)

GRACE. (*Speaking the moment she is on stage*) Here they are!

TOM. (*Below table R. with RUTH*) Yes—we were just going to join you—— (*Turning to RUTH*) Weren't we?

GRACE. It's too late now.

MRS. PALMER. It's commencing to cloud up, so we shall have to be going soon.

MRS. BROCKTON. Please don't hurry!

WILSON. (*Enters L.2, coming C. with telegram on salver*) Telegram for Mr. Brockton. (*Gives*

telegram to BROCKTON and exits L.2. MRS. BROCKTON moves up to VERDI.)

BROCKTON. (*Opening telegram*) Excuse me?—Mrs. Palmer.

MRS. PALMER. Certainly. (*Sits on settee.*)

BROCKTON. (*Glancing through telegram*) My—my! This is unfortunate.

RUTH. Why, what is it, Father? (*MRS. BROCKTON comes down to R. of BROCKTON.*)

MRS. PALMER. Nothing serious, I hope?

BROCKTON. Well, I'm afraid Ruth won't be able to play at the Professor's concert.

VERDI. (*Coming down c. GRACE to back of settee*) Not play? Why—what has happened? (*TOM crosses to R. of settee.*)

BROCKTON. (*Indicating telegram*) From Perkins—my lawyer in Chicago. (*Reads telegram.*)

RUTH. (*Rising*) What does he say, Father?

BROCKTON. "Judge refuses further adjournment. Case on calendar for Wednesday. Will be absolutely necessary for you and Mrs. Brockton to be in Chicago Wednesday morning." (*Then gives telegram to MRS. BROCKTON. To PALMERS*) You see, Mother and I are trying to recover some money we put into a venture. (*MRS. BROCKTON sits chair L. of table.*)

VERDI. (*Coming down to R. of BROCKTON*) But Miss Brockton—must she go too?

RUTH. I hate to disappoint you, Professor, but—

VERDI. Ah! After all the preparation—and she study so hard—am I to lose my star pupil from my concert?

MRS. PALMER. That is too bad!

VERDI. Does the telegram—say for Miss Brockton to go? (*Crosses R. behind table.*)

BROCKTON. Well, we can't leave her alone in the house with the butler.

RUTH. I can go to a hotel, Father.

BROCKTON. (*Shaking his head*) I know—but a girl alone in a hotel—!

VERDI. (*With a sudden thought*) Perhaps Miss Brockton—she has some friends with whom she can stay? (*TOM leans over and whispers to MRS. PALMER, who smiles and nods.*)

BROCKTON. That would be all right, but we hardly know anyone in this section.

TOM. (*Coming c. MRS. PALMER rises. GRACE comes around L. below settee*) Let me offer a suggestion: If—if Miss Brockton doesn't have to go, I'm sure my mother and Grace will be delighted to have her as our guest.

MRS. PALMER. Of course we shall!

RUTH. It's very kind of you, but really I couldn't think of inconveniencing you. (*BROCKTON, MRS. BROCKTON and VERDI glance quickly at her.*)

MRS. PALMER. Inconvenience? Not at all!

RUTH. But I'm sure I should only prove a nuisance. There's my music——

GRACE. We shall enjoy hearing you play.

RUTH. And there's Professor Verdi and my lessons——

MRS. PALMER. Professor, you wouldn't object to giving Miss Brockton her lessons at our home, would you? It's such a little way from here.

VERDI. (*Behind table*) Certainly not! It would be just as convenient as coming here. (*With elaborate bow, gives RUTH a knowing smile of satisfaction and crosses up to window.*)

TOM. (*Crosses to R., near RUTH*) Then it's all settled—I'll fetch the car for you—— (*MRS. BROCKTON rises; crosses to join the LADIES. BROCKTON crosses to front of table.*)

RUTH. (*Crossing to MRS. PALMER*) Are you sure—I won't be in the way?

MRS. PALMER. We should be offended if you

refused. (*VERDI crosses to piano; opens music book.*)

TOM. (*To BROCKTON*) It's satisfactory to you, isn't it?

BROCKTON. (*Turning to TOM. Crosses to c.*) Satisfactory? Oh, entirely so!

MRS. BROCKTON. (*To MRS. PALMER*) We are all delighted!

TOM. (*To RUTH*) What time shall I call for you?

BROCKTON. (*To RUTH*) Mr. Palmer is speaking to you, dear!

RUTH. (*Turning to TOM, then to BROCKTON*) What train will you take, Father?

BROCKTON. The Twentieth Century.

RUTH. (*To TOM*) Then I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll motor down to New York with Father and Mother—then I'll return to your house.

TOM. (*Taking her hands*) Good!

MRS. PALMER. We shall expect you.

RUTH. (*VERDI crosses to door L.2, opens it, then crosses to back of settee*) Tomorrow. (*MRS. PALMER, GRACE and MRS. BROCKTON move toward door L.2.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. It's very kind of you——

MRS. PALMER. Not at all—we're delighted to have Ruth with us——

BROCKTON. (*Dropping down beside RUTH*) We'll wire you when to expect us back. (*Joins group at door.*)

TOM. (*Down to RUTH*) Are you sure you don't want me to call for you?

RUTH. I'll see Mother off, and motor back in our car. (*MRS. PALMER and GRACE say "goodbye" to the BROCKTONS, and bowing to VERDI, exit L.2.*)

TOM. Just as you say. (*Shaking hands*) I'll see you tomorrow. (*Crosses up to MRS. BROCKTON; shaking hands*) Goodbye, Mrs. Brockton.

MRS. BROCKTON. Goodbye. So glad you called.

TOM. (*Bowing to VERDI*) Goodbye, Professor. (*To BROCKTON, who is at door*) Goodbye, sir. I hope you win your suit.

BROCKTON. Thank you. I'll go as far as the door with you. (*They exit L.2.*)

(*Hall door is heard to close. MOTOR starts. AUTO HORN loud. RUTH has gone up by window. MRS. BROCKTON stands leaning against piano, looking into hall. VERDI stands L. below settee. ALL stand tensely silent. As the sound of the departing auto dies out, BROCKTON enters L.2; closes door.*)

BROCKTON. They're gone! (*Instantly the demeanor of the ENTIRE COMPANY changes. BROCKTON, MRS. BROCKTON and VERDI burst into uproarious laughter.*)

VERDI. (*Crossing to R. below table*) It was perfect—perfect!

MRS. BROCKTON. We're in society, we are! (*Tears off gray wig and holds it up, then throws it on settee*) I ought to paste this snow mat on the top of my head and stay in society. (*Sits on settee, takes wad of chewing gum from arm of settee, puts it in her mouth and chews it.*)

WILSON. (*Enters L.2 with whiskey and glasses on tray, crossing R. to table*) Here you are, ladies—the booze am served! (*Puts tray on table.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Laughingly pointing to WILSON*) Wilson, the new butler!

WILSON. (*Takes off coat and throws it on steps R.C.*) The frame-up worked, eh? (*Crossing to table, takes glass. VERDI comes up to back of table.*) Did it work? With Nan and the Professor both on the inside—that's what I call finished work. (*Turns to RUTH*) Nan, you'll go down in history for this.

RUTH. (*Sitting on piano bench*) Yes, I dare say, George, history isn't made until it's all over.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*To chair R. of table, throwing wig on foot of steps R.C. Sits*) Yes, history is only for the dead ones.

BROCKTON. (*Expanding with good humor and crossing back to RUTH*) Think of it, Nan! Half a million worth of jewels in one clip! Do you know what this little enterprise is going to do? It will attach an imperishable lustre to the name of Nan Carey. Nan, you'll be the Napoleon of Crookdom, and if genius is to be commemorated to posterity, you'll have a tomb as big as Napoleon's.

WILSON. (*About to drink*) What's that about the Tombs?

MRS. BROCKTON. There ain't no bail once you get into one of those tombs he means.

BROCKTON. (*Lifting glass to RUTH*) Here's to Nan Carey, our incomparable leader! (*ALL drink except RUTH.*)

WILSON. (*Looks significantly at RUTH*) I'm drinking, but we ain't got those stones yet.

MRS. BROCKTON. Always shoutin' calamity, ain't you?

WILSON. We ain't spending it yet. (*Puts glass on table.*)

VERDI. (*Coming around and down c., puts glass on table*) I know how I'll spend mine.

WILSON. (*Sarcastically*) Open a peanut stand, I suppose? (*General laugh.*)

VERDI. (*Snapping finger in WILSON's face*) Peanuts! Bah!

WILSON. Well, what would you do with it?

VERDI. (*Drawing himself up majestically, strutting down c.*) What shall I do? Ah! I am rich—no more I take the chance—I live like the gentleman—I go to the opera—to the concert—I devote

myself to my music. (*Crosses and stands front of settee.*)

WILSON. That's a fine future for a wop crook.

BROCKTON. (*Crosses to L. of WILSON, putting glass on table*) You don't understand the soul of an artist.

WILSON. Ah! I suppose you'll build a library or something like that?

BROCKTON. No, I shall merely settle down and become a nice, quiet, hypocritical, law-abiding citizen.

WILSON. (*Shaking his head*) My God! Another good crook gone wrong! (*General laugh. To RUTH, who is still looking musingly into the distance*) Nan, what are you dreaming about?

RUTH. (*Coming out of absorption with a start*) Oh, I was just thinking!

WILSON. Building air castles, too! (*VERDI moves to back of settee.*)

RUTH. I was just thinking, if we applied the same energy and resourcefulness and imagination to some honest pursuit——

BROCKTON. Honest pursuit? That's only a matter of viewpoint.

MRS. BROCKTON. Sure!

RUTH. I know, George, but the world calls us crooks, and we have no answer. (*Crosses down L.; sits on settee.*)

BROCKTON. (*Coming L. to settee*) No answer? Here's our answer: The world calls us crooks, rogues, scoundrels, and we say to the world—what are you? In what way are you better than we are? (*ALL voice approval.*) In what way is your scheming and conniving other than ours, though you practice as lawyer, doctor, merchant, financier? What is your respectability but a cloak of deception? In fact, you are not as *honest* as we are, for we admit

our *dishonesty*. No answer, eh? We say to all of them—go where you will, roam far and wide, but out of crookdom you will never be. For what is the world but an empire of fraud? (*Goes up c. ALL applaud.*)

VERDI. Brava! Brava! (*Applauding.*)

WILSON. (*Applauding*) Good! Good! Georgie, you should have been a politician.

MRS. BROCKTON. Yes, and he might have been, too, if he'd ever been able to live in one district long enough to have a vote.

RUTH. (*Looks blankly ahead, then suddenly shakes herself as if coming out of a dream, rises and comes to R.C. To chair*) Sit down, everybody. I want to talk to you. (*BROCKTON sits in chair L.C. WILSON on settee. TONY on L. arm of settee. MRS. BROCKTON in chair R. of table. RUTH sits L. of table.*) Boys, do you realize that we're on the eve of the biggest job ever pulled off in this country? (*ALL ad lib. questioningly.*) Well, we are. So pay attention. The minute we get those jewels, we scatter for South America. George and Nell, you take the first boat direct for Rio Janeiro. Tony, you get there by way of Havana. Wilson, you travel by way of New Orleans. I'll follow the quickest way I can.

WILSON. And who's going to carry the stuff?

RUTH. None of us.

OMNES. What? (*VERDI rises.*)

RUTH. None of us.

BROCKTON. (*Leaning forward*) We're not going to leave it behind us, are we?

RUTH. No, we are not. We'll let Uncle Sam take care of it for us and see that it's safely delivered.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Alarmed*) Uncle Sam?

RUTH. Yes, Uncle Sam, Nellie. Now, here's my

plan. We'll pack them in a nice little box, and mail it to ourselves in Rio Janeiro, and we'll mail those—the Stuyvesant jewels—along with them. Now, is that satisfactory? (*ALL voice dissent and look dubiously at one another. VERDI crosses to end of settee.*) Wait a moment! (*Slaps table with hand; rises, silencing them*) Remember this! The howl that went up after the Stuyvesant job won't be a whisper compared to the noise the Palmer job is going to cause. They'll be searching for the stones all over—at every fence—and every pawnshop and jewelry merchant will be on the alert for them, just as they are for these. The minute one of these stones shows itself on the market, up here, we're done for. And from now on we have Ferris to deal with. (*Sits slowly L. of table.*)

WILSON. I'd take a long chance for just one crack at that guy. (*VERDI moves up L.*)

RUTH. Yes, you probably would—but the important thing is to beat it before he gets us. (*Rises; crosses down R.*) Now, here are my plans for Rio Janeiro. You—George—you're in the jewelry business—you are down looking over the ground to open a high-class jewelry store. Tony, you're down there to open a music studio—— (*VERDI crosses to end of piano.*) Wilson, you're looking for—cheap lumber to export. And I'll be a tourist traveling for my health. Is that understood?

BROCKTON. Perfectly.

RUTH. (*Crosses to chair L. of table. Stands back of it*) Now, tomorrow, George, Nell and I will motor into town. While we're waiting for the Twentieth Century to leave we'll look after the transportation to South America. Then you and Nell come back here by way of the Harlem Division—and don't budge out of the house. Keep all the shades down—and Steve, you keep away from the

shades. And Nellie, for pity's sake, pay no attention to the doorbell.

MRS. BROCKTON. It can ring its head off for all I care. (*VERDI moves to R. of piano.*)

RUTH. Good! Now, Steve, there's a hedge, a very high hedge, across the way from the Palmer House. You hide behind it while Tony is giving me my music lesson. The moment we locate where the jewels are kept Tony will play the signal on the piano. Let's hear it, Tony. (*TONY sits at piano and plays the signal once through.*) That mean's we've located the stuff. (*WARN Curtain.*)

WILSON. What do I do after that?

RUTH. What do you do after that? Why, frame up something to get into the house to see me. (*Looks around room. Her eyes alight on mesh bag on table, R. Takes it up and hands it to WILSON. WILSON rises.*) Here, bring me my mesh bag that I'm supposed to have forgotten—that's good enough to get you in. I'll give you the layout of the house when you get there. Now, have you got that?

WILSON. I'm over in the hedge, while Tony is in the house—when I get the signal—then I come in to see you? (*Sits.*)

RUTH. Good! That's right. (*Turning to others*) Now you all understand clearly what you're to do?

BROCKTON. I understand.

WILSON. We got you!

VERDI. Perfectly.

MRS. BROCKTON. It's a cinch.

RUTH. Then that's all there is to it.

BROCKTON. That's all.

MRS. BROCKTON. That's all!

RUTH. (*Looks around room. A pleased smile of satisfaction spreads over the faces of the OTHERS. They stretch their limbs and look admiringly at*

RUTH, *who sits in chair L. of table. She relaxes. A smile breaks over her face*) That's all. Well, boys, it looks like a good day's work for us!

CURTAIN

Second Curtain: Picture.

Third Curtain: COMPANY call.

Fourth Curtain: RUTH, TOM and BROCKTON.

Fifth Curtain: RUTH and TOM.

ACT TWO

The room is a luxuriously furnished living room, with double doors at Upper R. opening into dining room. A door at back L.C. leading into vestibule. At back R.C., a large double window opening on a small balcony and affording a view of the landscape. Up L. on the side is a large window with window-seat. The walls of the room are panelled. One of the panels at back, between the door L.C. and windows, being arranged to slide open by pressing a spring in the wall. Among the furnishings of the room are a baby grand piano down R. below dining-room doors. A large settee stands against it in front. Piano lamp above it at back. A large mantel and fireplace with floral box in opening stands down L. A large comfortable armchair in front of the fireplace. A large rocker stands near window L. Library table stands down L.C. Small settee in front of it, a straight-backed chair back of it, and at the R. of it another large armchair. Small stand and lamp stands against wall up L. Small stand in window with ferns up R.C. Small straight-backed chair up R.C. near windows.

AT RISE: MRS. PALMER is discovered seated in armchair in front of fireplace, reading book. As Curtain gets well up, GRACE enters R., coming down C.

GRACE. Whew! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! (MRS. PALMER *looks up from book.*) Another moment in a room with her and I should have fallen on the floor from sheer dizziness.

MRS. PALMER. Why, what's the matter?

GRACE. (*Going to piano and putting down her vanity-vase*) Chatter, chatter, chatter! Nothing but questions from the moment she arrived! (*Back to former position*) Good gracious! She's enough to drive one crazy! Just because her folks are going to build a new house when their present lease expires, she's preparing herself on architecture. So I had to tell her all about this place. Describe every room in the house, every entrance and exit, where every hallway leads to, what's down in the basement, where do the servants sleep? (*Puts hands to her head, crossing L.*) By this time I'd probably be deep in a description of the hardwood trimmings, if I hadn't invented an excuse to get away. (*Sits on settee R.C.*)

MRS. PALMER. I hope you weren't rude to her.

GRACE. Don't be alarmed. Tom's little romance won't suffer at my hands. Did you ever think, though, it was in him to grow so fond of any woman?

MRS. PALMER. Oh, well, we're all human.

TOM. (*Enters through door L.C. He is smoking a cigarette and comes lazily down c.*) Hello—hello! (*Looking around room*) Where's our little guest got to?

GRACE. (*Sarcastically*) Our little guest is in her nest dolling up for her host.

MRS. PALMER. Where have you been? (*Closes book, rises, puts book back in rack on table, crosses up to window L. and fixes curtains.*)

TOM. In the garden.

GRACE. Hm!—looking for a nice quiet nook in which to dream of future bliss with her?

TOM. Now what's the matter with you?

GRACE. Oh, nothing that you could understand.

TOM. (*Crosses to L. of settee; seriously*) Now, see here, Grace, I'm depending on you to make things pleasant for Ruth!

GRACE. (*Rising, crossing in front of TOM*) I've just had three-quarters of an hour with her, and I relinquish the chairmanship of the entertainment committee to you. Believe me, you'll find she doesn't grow on acquaintance. (*Crosses to back of table.*)

TOM. Is that a fact? Well—well——

(*RUTH enters R., followed by EDWARD PALMER, a distinguished-looking gentleman of about fifty. She is charmingly dressed in an afternoon gown and carries in her hand a small jewel box containing two pieces of jewelry.*)

RUTH. (*Coming down c.*) Hello, everybody! I hope I haven't kept you waiting long?

TOM. (*To L. of RUTH; he brightens perceptibly on seeing her*) Hello, Ruth! I thought we had lost you! (*After greeting her, MRS. PALMER crosses up to window R.C.*)

RUTH. I was lost—out there! (*Points through R. door*) For the life of me I couldn't find my way in that maze of corridors. Then I met Mr. Palmer and he showed me the way.

PALMER. (*Taking a step down R.C.*) Yes, I was just starting out on my afternoon stroll and ran into Miss Brockton. (*MRS. PALMER works over to piano.*)

GRACE. Um!—been wandering around the house?

RUTH. Yes, trying to find my way. But that's nothing. My sense of direction always was poor. (*Sits in armchair L.C.*)

PALMER. Oh, I'm sorry, Miss Brockton, I was

unable to pay my respects to your parents yesterday, but I hope to do so on their return. Did they get away safely this afternoon? (Tom crosses to chair L.C. and sits on arm.)

RUTH. Yes, they must be well on their way to Chicago by now.

PALMER. (Turning to MRS. PALMER) Mother, you must ask them over to dinner when they return.

MRS. PALMER. (Coming down to settee R.C., sits) The very first Sunday after they get back.

PALMER. (Turning to RUTH again) When do you expect them?

RUTH. I can't say to that—Father promised to telegraph me.

PALMER. Well, we'll try to keep you from getting too lonesome. How about it, Tom?

TOM. You leave that to me.

PALMER. (Jovially) See that you don't shirk the job. (To RUTH) Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go for my usual stroll before dinner. It's about the only exercise I get.

MRS. PALMER. Don't forget, dinner will be served at six-thirty.

PALMER. (Crossing up R. toward door) I'll work up an appetite to remind me.

GRACE. (Back of table) So long, Dad.

PALMER. (At door) I'll be back in a little while. (Bowing) Goodbye—goodbye. (Exits R.)

RUTH. (Turning to MRS. PALMER) Oh! I just love this house! It's just the sort of a house I've always wanted, and I shall instruct our architects to plan our home along the same lines. Before I leave I'm going to ask you to show me through all the rooms. (Rises; crosses R. to L. of settee.)

GRACE. Tom, a call for volunteers! Do I hear any answer?

TOM. (*Rising, crosses to RUTH*) I'm the official guide of this establishment.

RUTH. (*Looking up at him*) That will be lovely! But I'm afraid my questions will tax my guide's patience. My experience with architects has been that they're as stubborn as a mule about their own ideas. (*GRACE crosses to front of settee L.C.; sits.*) I am going to prime myself with a lot of information about this establishment. You'll help me all you can, won't you?

TOM. Ask me anything you want to know, and if I can't tell you, we'll figure it out from the diagram. (*Crosses to table.*)

RUTH. (*Surprised; crosses to c.*) The diagram?

TOM. The diagram of the house. It might be of help to you.

RUTH. (*Crosses to chair L.C.; sits*) I'm sure it would.

TOM. (*Opens drawer and takes out diagram*) The agent had it prepared for us. (*Crossing to RUTH, showing diagram*) It shows the location of every room—its size—what it's used for—— (*RUTH starts to examine it.*)

MRS. PALMER. Why don't you take it with you and show it to the architect?

RUTH. Are you sure you can spare it? (*Lays diagram on table. Smiling*) Really, I don't know how to thank you.

MRS. PALMER. By making yourself entirely at home. Tell me, dear, did you find your room thoroughly comfortable?

RUTH. Oh, yes, this will help me. (*Rising; crossing to MRS. PALMER*) Now, Mrs. Palmer, you won't mind my asking if it's all right to leave this around the room? (*Holding out package in hand*) I just brought it from the jewelers!

MRS. PALMER. Is it very valuable?

RUTH. Two of my best pieces. I had them reset from gold to platinum.

MRS. PALMER. You're perfectly right, dear, not to leave them about. It's never safe with servants in the house. Not that I think that ours are more dishonest than the rest of them, but it's foolhardy to throw temptation in people's way. Here, I'll put them with ours. (*Holds out hand for box.*)

RUTH. (*Giving her box*) Thank you so much!

MRS. PALMER. (*Crossing to TOM, who stands L. c.*) Tom, will you put it in the safe?

TOM. Immediately. (*Takes box and goes up L. of panel in back wall.*)

RUTH. (*Standing R.C. Turning to TOM*) There's no hurry about it, if it's going to put you to any trouble——

TOM. No trouble at all! The safe is right here! Now watch!

RUTH. (*Crossing up R. of panel*) Yes, I will! (*TOM presses spring in back wall and panel slides open, revealing the iron door of a safe. RUTH gives a start of surprise.*)

GRACE. (*Still on settee, L.C.*) What do you think of it?

RUTH. What a clever idea! (*Crossing to settee R.C.*) I should never have thought of looking for it—there!

MRS. PALMER. (*Has dropped into armchair L.C.*) We used to keep our valuables in a safe deposit vault, but it was such a nuisance having to dash into town every time you wanted to wear any of them.

GRACE. Don't you think this is much more convenient?

RUTH. Oh! Much more!

MRS. PALMER. And they're just as safe!

RUTH. (*Turning toward her*) Are they really?

TOM. (*Crosses to L. of settee R.C.*) It looks easy,

but I'd like to meet the thief who can get into this box.

RUTH. Really?

TOM. He'd never forget the experience if he survived.

RUTH. (*Taken aback*) If he survived——

TOM. (*Points as he describes; crosses up to safe*) I'll show you. You see this combination? Looks like nickel—but it isn't. (*RUTH comes up to R. of safe.*)

GRACE. It's solid copper.

MRS. PALMER. Charged with electricity.

TOM. Touch it and you take hold of a live wire. We get the current from the heavy feed wire outside. Can you imagine the shock? (*Both laugh heartily.*)

RUTH. Yes, indeed. Can I imagine the shock? I should say I can imagine the shock. (*Coming down c.*) Would—er—wouldn't it be apt to kill?

MRS. PALMER. Not instantaneously.

RUTH. No?

GRACE. But the torture wouldn't last over ten minutes.

RUTH. (*Crosses R. to settee*) I see—sort of a lingering death! (*Sits on settee R.C.*)

TOM. It might not prove fatal if the switch were turned off in time.

RUTH. (*Turning and looking at TOM*) A switch?

MRS. PALMER. You see, there's an alarm attached——

RUTH. An alarm?

TOM. (*Crosses down to table L.C.*) I'll show you. (*RUTH rises and comes c. TOM takes penholder from table*) This is a rubber composition, but I'll be on the safe side. (*Takes glass of water from table and going c. to RUTH, dips the end of penholder in water and placing glass on table, goes to R. of safe. RUTH to L. of safe. MRS. PALMER*

crosses and sits on settee R.C.) Now it's entirely non-conducting. *(He gingerly touches the end of penholder to the combination lock, giving the handle a sharp turn. Instantly a large GONG off L. sets up a deafening clamor, followed by the SOUND of people running in both sides of the house.)*

RUTH. *(Startled, leans against wall)* My gracious! *(The PALMERS laugh heartily.)*

(The FOOTSTEPS in the hall draw nearer, suddenly the c. door is thrown open and PHIL comes dashing on. He is a stockily built man of about forty, dressed as a butler.)

PHIL. *(Stops abruptly on seeing OTHERS, and to TOM)* I beg pardon, sir! *(Stands gasping for breath.)*

TOM. *(Laughing, still at safe)* It's all right, Phil. Turn off the switch.

PHIL. Yes, sir. *(Steps into hall and turns off switch. GONG STOPS. He steps back into room)* All the servants are at their places, sir.

TOM. Tell them it was merely a demonstration.

PHIL. *(With a puzzled look at ALL of them. They ALL laugh.)* Yes, sir. *(Exits L.C.)*

MRS. PALMER. You see, dear, the servants are all drilled. The moment that bell sounds, every avenue is thoroughly guarded.

RUTH. Oh, yes, I could see that. Quite an elaborate reception you've prepared. *(Coming down to c.)* Is there anything else?

TOM. *(Coming down c.—laughingly)* No, that's all.

RUTH. That's enough. *(Coming to back of chair L.C.)* Er—I mean that's enough to discourage any burglar. *(With a sigh)* I wish we had the same safeguards at home.

GRACE. *(Interested. Rising)* Why, my dear, you

don't mean to say that you leave your valuables unprotected?

RUTH. Oh! I'm not a bit uneasy about them. We have a secret hiding-place. Some day I'll show it to you.

TOM. (*Crosses to L. of settee R.C.*) Now—any time you want them—just ask for them. No trouble at all to get them.

RUTH. I can see that now. (*To back of table*) Really, I shall hate to tear them away from such good company.

TOM. Would you like to see our collection? (*Crosses up to R. of safe.*)

RUTH. (*Looking out front as if to say "this is too easy"*) Would I like to see them? (*Goes to TOM*) Nothing I'd like better.

MRS. PALMER. (*Rises; moves up to R. of safe*) Oh, Tom, some other time. I'm sure Ruth doesn't want to see them now.

TOM. (*Throwing open door of safe again*) I want her to see them now. (*Takes out two red morocco jewel-cases*) Here, Grace— (*GRACE comes up, taking case from TOM; comes L. to table, followed by RUTH.*) Here, Mother. (*Giving MRS. PALMER a case, she comes down to the table on RUTH'S R.*)

GRACE. These are the emeralds. (*RUTH takes case and is looking at them.*)

MRS. PALMER. These emeralds are larger.

RUTH. Larger? (*Quickly puts down the case she is looking at and takes the other one.*)

TOM. (*Coming down L.C. and moving armchair to R. of table. He brings two cases*) The diamonds and pearls!

RUTH. (*Quickly putting down the case she has and feasting her eyes on the case TOM has opened*) Oh! Diamonds and pearls! I adore diamonds and pearls! It's a heavenly combination.

MRS. PALMER. (*Proudly. Taking a magnificent collarette of diamonds and pearls from case and dropping down R.C., holding it up so the lights can play on it*) Our piece de resistance!

TOM. Oh, yes, we are very fond of that little fellow.

RUTH. (*Admiringly, coming down to her and taking it*) It's the most magnificent thing I've ever seen! You must have had great trouble matching these pearls, the weight and color. Oh, yes, indeed, it is very beautiful. I should be afraid to own it, for fear of losing it. (*Turning to TOM*) Did it cost a great deal?

TOM. Oh, about fifty thousand dollars.

RUTH. (*Jokingly, with a gesture of dismissal*) Oh! About fifty thousand dollars. (*Crosses to front of settee R.C. ALL laugh.*)

MRS. PALMER. (*Coming to her*) Try it on, dear; it ought to be very becoming to you.

RUTH. (*Waving away the temptation*) Really—I—prefer——

GRACE. I know Tom would love to see it on you.

TOM. (*Crosses to c.*) Please, Ruth—as a favor to me!

RUTH. (*Looking at him. GRACE crosses to front L.C. of settee; picks up mirror.*) Well, if you insist—as a favor to you. (*She hands the necklace to MRS. PALMER, who slips it around her throat. She crosses in front of table. GRACE holds up mirror. RUTH takes mirror; crosses L. MRS. PALMER moves up to windows R.C.*) Oh! It's beautiful!

PHIL. (*Enters L.C., showing VERDI on*) Professor Verdi!

VERDI. (*Standing in doorway, bowing profoundly*) Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Ah! Pardon my being late. (*TOM crosses up to MRS. PALMER. GRACE crosses to back of table. Comes a step into room; gives hat and cane to PHIL,*

who exits L.C. VERDI comes down L.C. to table and bowing profoundly to GRACE and RUTH, bows his head almost into case of diamonds and pearls standing open on R. end of table. He straightens up with a start of surprise, his face lighting up with an expression of supreme satisfaction. He looks to RUTH and his eyes catch collarette on her neck, giving him another start. He exclaims) Dio! (He comes down to table again and bursts into rapturous Italian over the jewels.)

GRACE. (*When VERDI has subsided*) Oh! Evidently, you admire precious stones, Professor?

VERDI. (*Going to c.*) Ah! Jewels to me—they are the poetry of inanimate—(*RUTH sits on settee L.C.*)—things. They sparkle—— (*He turns around, facing upstage, and his eyes fall upon the open safe in the wall. He gives a gasp of amazement. As he does so* MRS. PALMER and TOM, standing at windows R.C., turn toward him, and he, to cover his astonishment, whirls as if in a dance) They dance with life and color! They fire my soul—— They inspire me with music. I cannot express it in words.

RUTH. (*Catching his eyes*) No—no—indeed. Never express it in words. Express it in music.

VERDI. (*Nodding to her that he has caught her meaning*) In music—yes—— (*Goes to piano; seats himself*) Music, ah! (*He plays over the signal agreed upon in previous Act; while he is playing, RUTH takes off collarette and puts it in case on table.*)

MRS. PALMER. (*Coming down above piano*) What was that, Professor? I don't think I ever heard it before.

VERDI. Something of my own composition.

GRACE. (*During the music has worked down to settee R.C.*) What a catchy tune! Won't you play it for us again?

MRS. PALMER. Do play it again.

RUTH. (*Catching his eyes again*) Yes, and play it louder.

VERDI. With pleasure, Si Seniorita. (*VERDI again plays the signal, playing it very loud. While he is playing, TOM crosses to the table, taking jewel cases, puts them in safe, closes it, pushes button and the panel springs back into place. As VERDI finishes, ALL applaud. He rises and bowing his thanks to them, crosses down L. and kissing RUTH's hand*) Grazie, Seniorita.

PHIL. (*Enters L.C. with card on salver, and coming to TOM, who is up R.C. with MRS. PALMER*) I beg pardon, sir.

TOM. (*Turning to him*) What is it?

PHIL. (*Extending salver*) A gentleman to see you, sir.

TOM. (*Taking card*) To see me?

PHIL. Yes, sir.

TOM. (*Reading card*) "Mr. Morton T. Hanley. Carnegie Hero Foundation." What does he want to see me about?

PHIL. He says he has some news.

TOM. Um! Ask him to come in.

PHIL. (*Going to door*) Yes, sir. (*Exits L.C. RUTH rises; goes to back of L.C. table.*)

RUTH. (*Coming a step toward C. and VERDI going down L.*) Would you rather see him alone?

TOM. No, please don't go. It can't be anything important.

(*PHIL enters L.C., showing on MR. HANLEY, a very distinguished man, whose grey pointed beard lends impressiveness to his appearance. HANLEY is dressed in correct afternoon attire, a black cutaway coat, black vest, striped trousers, sharply creased, and black patent leather shoes. RUTH comes down to front of settee L.C.*)

PHIL. (*Standing R. of L.C. door*) Mr. Hanley.

TOM. (*Advancing toward HANLEY*) How do you do, sir?

HANLEY. Mr. Palmer?

TOM. That is my name.

HANLEY. (*Hands PHIL his hat. PHIL takes it and exits L.C. Coming down c. and shaking hands with TOM*) I am very glad to meet you, sir, especially under the circumstances which bring me here. As my card states, I represent the Carnegie Hero Foundation.

TOM. (*Indicating chair L.C.*) Won't you sit down?

HANLEY. No, thank you. I am only staying for a moment.

TOM. (*Turning to MRS. PALMER*) Oh! Mr. Hanley, let me present my mother!

HANLEY. (*Bowing to her*) I am delighted, madam!

TOM. (*Indicating GRACE*) My sister—Mr. Hanley! (*Indicating VERDI, who stands extreme L.*) Professor Verdi—

HANLEY. (*Turning and bowing to VERDI*) How do you do, sir!

TOM. And Miss Brockton—(*RUTH is standing L.C.*) —Mr. Hanley!

HANLEY. (*Taking a step toward her*) Miss Brockton?—Miss Ruth Brockton?

GRACE. Do you know Miss Brockton?

HANLEY. Not personally, but her name is on my list. I was about to motor over to your house, Miss Brockton. We are gathering the testimony of the eye witnesses to Mr. Palmer's valorous conduct on the occasion of the sinking of the passenger steamer, the *Termania*, with a view of awarding first prize—a gold medal for exceptional heroism—

TOM. (*With an embarrassed air*) You're not going to pin a Carnegie Hero Medal on me?

HANLEY. That is the object of my visit.

TOM. (*Protestingly*) Honestly, I don't deserve anything like that.

RUTH. (*Taking a step forward*) Don't let him underestimate himself, Mr. Hanley! Why, during that panic, after that frightful explosion, in the wild rush for lifeboats—what chance would the women and children have had if it had not been for him? With even the crew fighting to save themselves, he stood against the rail, pistol in hand, holding back the infuriated mob, and when the last boat was launched, we saw him, master of the situation, resigning his own seat to a little boy who had been separated from his parents. (*In a more subdued tone*) When that ship went down, if it hadn't been that the sea was calm, and we saw him clinging to a log—he, too, would have been lost!

HANLEY. (*Enthusiastically crossing and down to her*) Miss Brockton, your statement completes our record of the disaster. If you will be so good as to write out what you have just said, attest it before a notary and mail it to us, the medal will be quickly awarded.

RUTH. I will be glad to do so.

HANLEY. Thank you. We will appreciate it. (*Turning to TOM*) Oh! By the way, Mr. Palmer! Some day, when you get a chance, you must visit our office and examine the tributes of your fellow passengers. Why, there are statements from some of the most prominent people of the country. There's one from Doctor Holt that will do you good to read. (*Smiling and turning to OTHERS*) If we didn't know that Doctor Holt was Mr. Carnegie's personal physician, we'd suspect his motive. And you ought to read the statement from Mr. Pearson, the President of the Union National Bank! But the clearest account of all we received from a detective—Ferris. (*TOM exchanges puzzled looks*

with MRS. PALMER and GRACE. VERDI, the moment FERRIS' name is mentioned, becomes very much agitated, his eyes take on a look of terror, his legs tremble and he gradually moves over to RUTH, as if for protection.)

TOM. (Looking at MRS. PALMER) Ferris? Ferris? I don't recall the name on the passenger list, do you, Mother?

MRS. PALMER. No!!!

HANLEY. He may have traveled incog. Detectives often do, especially when they're after somebody. (VERDI gives a gasp.)

RUTH. Have you seen Mr. Ferris?

HANLEY. No, not personally.

RUTH. Is he in the city?

HANLEY. Well, that I don't know. I called at his office this morning. One of his assistants told me Mr. Ferris was after an extremely clever gang of criminals against whom he has been gathering evidence for the past five months. He expects to land them all by the end of the week. (VERDI, standing alongside of RUTH, almost sinks to the floor. RUTH, feeling him sinking, nudges him in the ribs with her elbow, straightening him up.) Then I'm to have an interview with him.

TOM. (Turning to HANLEY) Well, please convey my thanks to Mr. Ferris, Doctor Holt, Mr. Pearson and all the others.

HANLEY. I shall be pleased to do so. And I hope shortly to have the honor of witnessing the formal presentation of the medal. We hope to hear from you shortly. (Shakes hands with TOM and turning to OTHERS) Good afternoon!

RUTH, GRACE and MRS. PALMER. Good afternoon!

VERDI. (Nervously wiping his forehead with his handkerchief and crossing over extreme L.) Good

afternoon! Good afternoon! (MRS. PALMER *crosses to back of piano.*)

TOM. Oh! Let me show you the way! (He opens the L.C. door and he and HANLEY exit, talking until well off stage.)

MRS. PALMER. (Mistaking VERDI's nervousness for impatience and anxiety to get at music lesson. To RUTH) We mustn't keep you from your music lesson any longer. I know the Professor is getting impatient. (To GRACE) Come, come. (Starts for door R.)

GRACE. All right, Mother. (MRS. PALMER exits R., GRACE turning to RUTH and VERDI.)

RUTH. Don't forget, Grace, bridge later. (Sits on settee L.C.)

GRACE. I know, dear. See you later. (Exits R.)

VERDI. (Crossing around above table and watching them, then comes down L.C. to end of table) Ferris! He followed you over on the boat. Why, that means he is laying a trap for us. And everything was just coming our way.

RUTH. (Sharply) Tony—wait a minute. (Motions him to close double doors R. He does so and comes back to end of table.)

VERDI. (Excitedly, but in a quiet voice) What are we going to do?

RUTH. (Gazing straight in front of her, thinking for a moment) Get those jewels out of that safe tonight.

VERDI. (In surprise) Regardless of Ferris?

RUTH. (Decisively) Regardless of everything.

VERDI. (Showing a desire to drop everything and get away) But if Ferris trailed you on the boat, it is certain that he knows that we are in here, and why we are here. Suppose he gets us while we are pulling off the job?

RUTH. We won't be any worse off than we are now.

VERDI. What do you mean?

RUTH. Two of the Stuyvesant pieces are in that safe.

VERDI. (*Throwing up his hands*) Oh, Dio! Why, that is more than plenty to convict us all. (*Almost crying*) And you hand them the evidence yourself! (*Takes step toward c., then, getting another thought, turns toward RUTH, with a startled exclamation*) Oh! I just thought of something! (*Takes step toward her*) Suppose—suppose that Ferris, he tipped off Mr. Palmer, told him you were a crook—(*RUTH gives a start*)—that everything you do is simply to rob him—suppose he tells him that and induces Mr. Tom to trap us?

RUTH. (*Highly agitated. Rising*) Tony, Tony—don't, don't, it's terrible. Isn't that funny? That same thought just crossed my mind. (*Crosses VERDI to c.*) Why, their readiness in showing me the safe, the combination. (*Turns and taking hold of VERDI's coat*) Why were they so free with their confidences? Parading the jewels before me? The more I think about it, the more significant it looks. (*Goes down front of settee R.C.*)

VERDI. (*C. Throwing up hands*) Ferris! Ferris! Over five hundred people go down on that boat and it is our misfortune to have him saved!

RUTH. Oh! I wonder what kind of a game he is trying to play on us. He seemed sincere enough. (*PHIL knocks gently at L.C. door. VERDI crosses to piano. RUTH crosses to L.C.*) Come in.

PHIL. (*Enters; comes down L.C.*) I beg your pardon, Miss Brockton. Your butler is calling. He says you forgot to bring your mesh-bag. Shall I take it?

RUTH. No, just have him bring it in! (*Crosses to R. of settee L.C.*)

PHIL. Yes, ma'am. (*He goes to L.C. door; calling*

down hall) This way. (*Steps in; stands at R. of door until WILSON comes in.*)

WILSON. You overlooked this, Miss Brockton, so I took the liberty of bringing it over. (*RUTH moves a little to R. PHIL exits L.C.; closes door. The instant the door is closed WILSON's manner changes; coming down c.*) I got the signal!

RUTH. (*Coming quickly, taking plans from table and opening them, holds them in front of WILSON*) All right. Here's the layout of the house.

WILSON. (*With a start of surprise*) Why, how did you—

RUTH. Never mind how I got it—there's no time to explain now. (*Points to diagram as she speaks*) Here's my room—two flights up. The first two windows from the front. (*VERDI is on the R., RUTH L. and WILSON C., all looking at plans.*) Both of you be in the hedges at midnight. When you see me wave a handkerchief in front of the window, you come in by way of the balcony.

WILSON. All right, but where is the little box?

VERDI. (*Turning and pointing to panel*) Behind that panel. And as easy as opening a can of sardines.

RUTH. (*Crossing up to panel. VERDI watches door R.*) Watch. (*Presses button and panel slides back, revealing safe. WILSON reaches for handle of safe. RUTH grabs his extended hand with her L. hand and pushes button closing panel with her R. hand*) Wait a minute! (*Moves cautiously to L.C. door, and opening it just a trifle, beckons to WILSON, who comes up behind her. She points to switch in hall, then closing door, comes down c. VERDI on her R., WILSON L., she puts her hands on their shoulders*) Steve, that combination is charged with electricity. That was the switch. Whatever you do, be sure to turn off the juice before monkeying with the combination. (*Indicating hall L.C.*)

WILSON. You bet I won't forget that little thing.

RUTH. Now, another thing! I want all of you to come over in the car—a little before midnight. Nell and George are to stay in the car, about a mile down the road. And above all, have everything ready in case we have to make a quick getaway. Now is that clear?

WILSON. I got you!

RUTH. (*Handing him diagram of house*) Put this in your pocket. If anything happens to change the plans, I'll get word over to you and Tony.

WILSON. (*Slowly and with emphasis*) Well, you'd better see that nothing does happen!

RUTH. What do you mean?

WILSON. I mean that any interference, especially from him—— Well, I'm not taking any chances tonight. (*Reaches to hip pocket for gun.*)

RUTH. (*Putting her hand on his arm and stopping him*) Don't pull that tonight. Don't forget that in anything you do we're your accomplices. Do you want us all to be taken for murder?

WILSON. Well, you know my sentiments. (*TOM turns the knob on L.C. door and opens it and enters. The other THREE relax into natural attitudes. VERDI crosses to piano.*) I thought you might need it. (*Handing her mesh bag.*)

RUTH. (*Taking bag*) Thank you, Wilson. It was very thoughtful of you. (*Crosses down R.C. and sits on settee. WILSON exits L.C. and closes door.*)

TOM. (*Coming down to table L.C.*) I hope I haven't butted into anything.

RUTH. (*Smiling at him*) Not at all.

TOM. (*Coming to front of table*) I didn't hear any music, so I thought perhaps you had postponed the lesson.

VERDI. (*Who has been standing near piano, coming down to settee R.C.*) Yes, Miss Brockton she feels fatigue today—she has been working so—so

I return tomorrow. (*Takes her hand and kisses it.*)

TOM. (*Coming L.C.*) Won't you stay for dinner?

VERDI. (*All smiles now*) Thank you. I should feel highly honored, but unfortunately I have another appointment, so I will have to ask you to excuse me this time.

TOM. Then perhaps some other time?

VERDI. Some other time I shall be most delighted. (*Turning to RUTH*) I hope you are better tomorrow. (*Bows; goes to L.C. door. TOM follows him up. VERDI turns at door and bows elaborately*) Au revoir! Au revoir! (*Exits L.C. and closes door.*)

TOM. (*Turning and coming down to end of settee R.C.*) He's a peculiar little fellow.

RUTH. Yes, isn't he?

TOM. So you like our house, eh, Ruth?

RUTH. Why, I just love it. Anyone with half an eye must admire the way everything is arranged. Tell me, how did you come to select this place?

TOM. I saw it advertised in one of the papers. After living most of our lives in the West, we couldn't get used to these cubbyhole apartments in New York. But do you know, I don't care much for this place——

RUTH. Don't you like it? I think it is so comfortable—so roomy.

TOM. It's neither city nor country—it's just suburban. The only thing that has kept me here since we got back has been—you! (*Leans on arm of settee.*)

RUTH. (*Surprised*) I?——

TOM. Yes. I'd have been at Palm Beach by now. I only stayed on because of the chance to be near you.

RUTH. Then, except for me, you'd have found it rather dreary up here?

TOM. What's there up here for anybody? Oh, I hate the city and its whole environment. (*Sits L. of RUTH*) Even in its merriment, there is always something shrill and harsh. Haven't you found it so?

RUTH. (*Dreamily*) Yes, I wish I could get away from here myself.

TOM. I wish we were far away from here. Down South among the flowers and the light of the tropical sun. Haven't you ever dreamed of that brightness? (*GRACE opens the door R. She stands silent, overhearing the proposal.*)

RUTH. Yes—I have dreamed of it often, and I've thought a lot, too, of the shock of awakening.

TOM. (*Ardently*) Ruth, I love you so devotedly there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you, nothing I wouldn't give you, nothing I ever want to do except to devote myself to your happiness. Ruth, dear, will you be my wife? (*After darting a quick, meaning glance toward them, GRACE withdraws, unobserved by TOM and RUTH, closing the door noiselessly behind her.*)

RUTH. (*Trying to control her emotions*) Your wife?—

TOM. Yes, we can be married and go away tomorrow or tonight. We can't get away from here too soon to suit me.

RUTH. (*Trying to evade answering him*) How can you think of leaving so abruptly?

TOM. What is there up here for me except you?

RUTH. Why this pressing anxiety?

TOM. Ruth, I just feel I can't live another day without you. Just tell me that you love me—that you care—

RUTH. I can't tell you that—*now!* (*Rises*) No, I haven't the right to.

TOM. No right to? Why not?

RUTH. (*Crosses to C., turning to Tom*) No. No, I haven't the right, Tom—— Suppose I had kept something hidden from you? Suppose there was something in my past——

TOM. (*Rises; comes to RUTH; pleadingly*) Oh, don't be ridiculous, Ruth! What can there be in the past of a girl like you? At the worst, some girlish prank that looks appalling to you but doesn't amount to shucks.

RUTH. What do you regard as merely a childish prank?

TOM. I haven't the faintest idea what is lurking in that terrible past of yours, but no matter what it is, it can't make any difference to me. I'd take you if, instead of the best, you were the worst woman in the world. No matter what you were, or what you had done, it couldn't alter my feelings for you. And all I want is to hear you say that you'll marry me. Ruth, will you?

RUTH. (*With an effort to control her feelings*) Tom—— Oh, I wish—I just wish you hadn't asked me. It makes it so difficult—it makes everything so hard. And I can't explain. I can only say I can't do it—no, I can't marry you now.

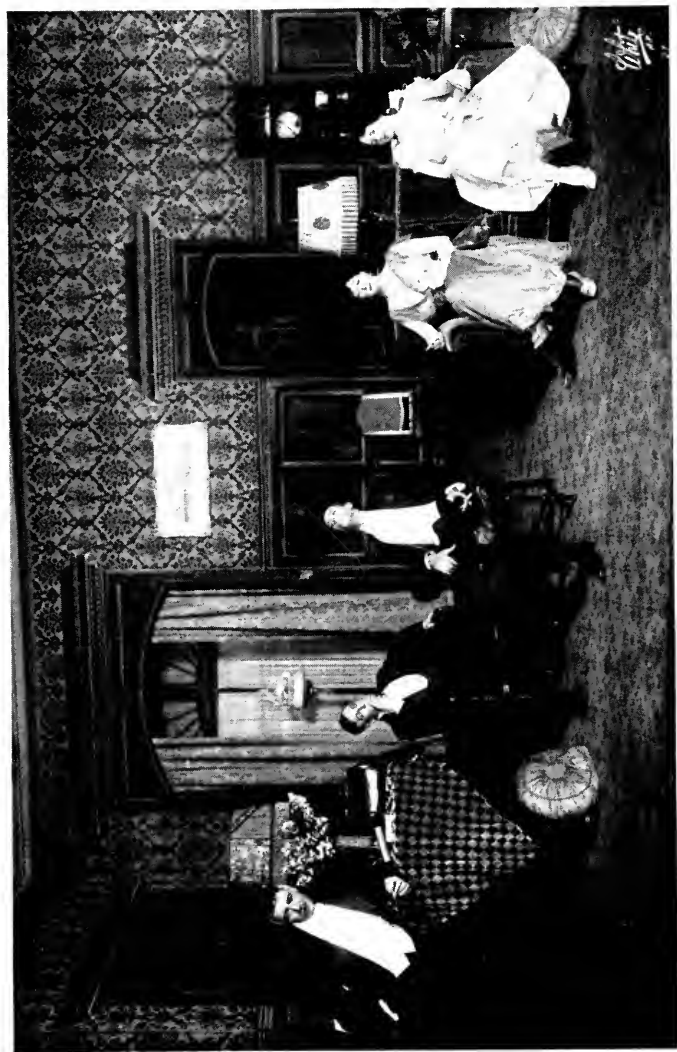
TOM. Not marry me? Is it because you don't care?

RUTH. No, it isn't that. It just can't be, that's all. (*Crosses to L.*)

TOM. (*Following*) Can't be? And only a moment ago I felt so sure of you! (*He looks about in a dazed way*) Have I been a fool and taken things for granted? Why, I felt as if I had your promise.

RUTH. (*Turning to him*) Was it from anything that I have ever said?

TOM. Oh, a girl doesn't have to say it. There are unspoken promises on which others build, and the disappointment hurts. Yes, Ruth, it hurts.



ACT II

See page 69

RUTH. Tom, I'm sorry if I have done anything to hurt you. I'm so very, very sorry. I wouldn't hurt you for anything in the world. (TOM stands L.C.)

PALMER. (*VOICE is heard off R.*) You see, Mother, I wasn't late for dinner after all. (RUTH crosses down extreme L. below table. TOM comes front of table. The doors R. open and GRACE enters, followed by MRS. PALMER and PALMER, in the order named. GRACE comes down to TOM. MRS. PALMER crosses L., above table. PALMER stops up C.)

MRS. PALMER. (*As she enters*) Hello! Where's the Professor?

PALMER. I saw the Professor leaving, so I supposed the lesson was finished.

GRACE. (*At TOM'S R.*) I hope we haven't interrupted anything?

TOM. (*Confused, darting a glance of annoyance at her, crosses to C.*) Not one little thing. (GRACE crosses up L. behind table.)

MRS. PALMER. (*Up L.C.*) Dinner will be served in ten minutes.

RUTH. Ten minutes—I must hurry. (*Crosses to settee R.C. and picks up mesh bag*) I want to dress for dinner. (*Going toward door R.*) Will you excuse me?

MRS. PALMER. Don't hurry, dear. A few minutes won't make any difference. (RUTH exits R. GRACE goes to lower L. end of table. MRS. PALMER back of table. TOM takes a few steps up stage and gazes after RUTH. PALMER crosses and closes R. doors. TOM turns to find the TWO WOMEN looking at him across the table. TOM comes down C., moving his fingers nervously. The atmosphere has changed now to one of suppressed excitement. The L.C. door flies open and PHIL excitedly dashes on and comes on TOM'S L.)

PHIL. Say, Grace told me about Ferris. How the devil did he get onto us?

PALMER. How did he locate us?

GRACE. (*Crosses around L. to front of table—to PHIL*) What's the difference now? (*To TOM*) Are we going to stick around here till he gets us?

PHIL. (*Turning to TOM*) Why, by this time he has probably connected us with every job we ever pulled off.

MRS. PALMER. (*Back of table*) My God! After waiting around all this time, are we going away with only two of her pieces?

PALMER. (*Going to TOM'S R.*) Listen. We followed you on here from the West because you said the picking was better. Well, we haven't picked up a damn thing since we've been here, and now we're liable to be picked up ourselves.

PHIL. Yes, and we've just been eating our heads off for a crack at those Brockton stones.

MRS. PALMER. I had my eye on that pearl necklace from the first time I saw Mrs. Brockton wear it. It must be worth thirty thousand dollars at the least.

GRACE. And between her and Ruth they've worn over twenty thousand dollars' worth of other junk. Are we going to leave that behind?

PHIL. Why, it would be like making them a present of it. (*Takes a few steps up L.C.*)

GRACE. Yes, and all because of your love affair. (*TOM gives her a quick, angry look. Crossing to TOM*) Oh, you needn't look at me like that. I heard you asking her to marry you. Why, you poor boob, what chance do you think you've got with her? If she doesn't know you are a crook, she will know it, and then what'll she do? Why, she'll run from you like she was escaping from a wild animal.

MRS. PALMER. What are you going to do?

PHIL. (*Taking a step down and throwing GRACE around to his L. and facing TOM. GRACE to back of table.*) Yes, come on—let's have a showdown.

PALMER. (*Down R., taking a step toward TOM*) What are we going to do?

TOM. (*Driven to speaking at last*) What the hell do you think we're going to do? (*He looks defiantly around, and from now on until Curtain takes charge of the situation and dominates it. Turns to PHIL*) Phil, you and I clean out that Brockton house tonight.

PALMER. What about me?

TOM. (*Turning to him*) You stay here and look after the woman.

PHIL. (*Pleased at the turn affairs have taken*) Good! Have you located where they keep the stuff?

TOM. No, and we haven't time to find out. She dropped a hint that the stones were all there, and we know there's no one in the house except the butler. If he won't tell willingly where the treasure-chest is— (*With a meaning look at PHIL, he crosses down L.*) I guess we know how to make him. (*PHIL turns up stage, allowing TOM to pass in front of him.*)

PALMER. (*At R. end of settee, R.C.*) What's the dope after we get the stones?

TOM. (*Turning and facing up stage*) South America— (*PHIL stops and turns.*) Buenos Ayres— Now, sit down, all of you. (*He goes up C., gets chair and places it down C. PHIL and PALMER sit on settee, L.C. MRS. PALMER near fireplace and GRACE behind table, L.C.*) Now, we're nailed the moment one of those stones shows its face on the market up here.

PHIL. You can bet we are.

TOM. The war closes Europe, but there are lots of rich ginks down in South America, and they're

getting richer every day. So get ready to scatter the minute we pull off the job.

PALMER. Who's going to take charge of the swag?

TOM. None of us.

ALL. (*Startled*) What?

TOM. We'll pack it in a box and ship it by express to Rio Janeiro. (*Looks around at them*) Isn't that all right? (*ALL rise and talk at once in answering.*)

PHIL. I don't know about that.

MRS. PALMER. I don't think so.

GRACE. I should say not.

PALMER. I hate to see it get out of our hands. } (*Together*)

(*WARN Curtain.*)

TOM. In case of trouble, we don't want it found on us, do we? (*ALL settle down again. Hold positions until Curtain.*)

PALMER. I guess you're right.

TOM. (*Turning to each as he addresses them. To MRS. PALMER*) Now, you and Grace travel by the way of 'Frisco. Phil, you and Ed go by way of New Orleans. I'll follow by the way of Panama. To avoid suspicion, you and Grace are a couple of tourists traveling for your health. Phil, you and Ed are sent down there to look over the cattle country, and I'll go down and open a first-class jewelry store. Now have you got that in your heads?

MRS. PALMER. I understand.

GRACE. Thank Heaven, we get away from here at last!

PHIL. You've said something.

TOM. Well, that's all there is to it. (*Lights cigarette.*)

PALMER. That's all.

GRACE. I hope so.

TOM. Well, it looks like a good day's work for us!

CURTAIN

Second Curtain: Picture.

Third Curtain: COMPANY.

Fourth Curtain: RUTH and TOM.

ACT THREE

The home of the Brocktons, late the same night. The Curtain rises on a dark stage. After a moment PHIL comes from L. outside the house and peers through the window. He pries up the window and the sound of breaking wood is heard. He raises window and cautiously enters, flashes light around the room and comes a few steps down c. PHIL moves to R., then quickly goes L., turns, waves his hand as a signal for TOM, then crouches down front of piano. TOM appears outside, climbs through window and comes down c. PHIL goes back to window and closes it; comes down again and goes to door L.2. TOM goes to door R.1, opens it and flashes lamp through it. As he turns back he sees telephone on stand below door and starts to cut the connection. PHIL opens door L.2 and a stream of light from hall lamp comes into room, startling them, and they drop to floor quickly. PHIL closes door quietly and goes to door L.1, opening it and flashing lamp through doorway. TOM finishes cutting the connections on the phone. FOOTSTEPS are heard off R.C., approaching. TOM goes quickly up stage; looks off R.C. Then he hurriedly exits R.1. PHIL comes up c. and crouches by baby grand piano. WILSON enters from R.C. He goes to lamp on stand up R. and lights it. BABY SPOT from R.C. covers him, and one from R.1 on table R.C. He opens door in lamp and takes wallet containing jewels from lamp

and comes down to table. He is just about to open wallet when PHIL comes from under the piano toward him and TOM from door R.1 with revolver leveled at him.

TOM. Put up your hands!

WILSON. *(Startled, jumps back and puts up hands)* What's the idea? *(Tries to grab jewels.)*

TOM. *(Starting toward him)* No, you don't! Keep them up. *(PHIL grabs WILSON by the arms and pulls him away from the table.)*

WILSON. *(Recognizing TOM)* You! I got it! That's the frame-up, eh? She sent you for them, did she?

TOM. Yes, she sent me. *(To PHIL)* See if he's got a gun!

PHIL. *(Pulling gun from WILSON's pocket and looking at it)* Automatic—1916 model.

TOM. *(Crosses up and puts out lamp. BABY SPOTS off)* He believes in preparedness. *(Comes down to WILSON)* Now, listen—we're here strictly on business, and we're in an awful hurry. So answer us the briefest you know how. *(Points to jewels)* Where's the rest of them?

WILSON. *(Loudly)* Go look for them yourself!

TOM. Sh! Now be a good boy, unless you want to make business for the undertaker. *(Starts to take jewels from the table.)*

WILSON. *(Loudly)* Say, what are you going to do with them?

TOM. *(To PHIL)* Put the muffler on him! *(PHIL takes muffler from pocket with one hand and throwing WILSON around and down R., is about to gag him when BROCKTON and VERDI, attracted by WILSON's loud talking, appear in doorway R.C., BROCKTON with revolver in hand. VERDI presses switch at R. of doorway and the room is suddenly a*

blaze of *LIGHT*. Brackets and white and amber in foots and concert border full on.)

BROCKTON. Throw up your hands! (TOM, who is at table, and PHIL, who is struggling with WILSON down L., turn with startled exclamations and raise their hands above their heads. BROCKTON, seeing jewels on table) We'll take charge of those just to avoid accidents. Tony, get his gun. (VERDI takes gun from TOM and crosses and stands guard at door L.2.) Wilson, get his! (Indicating PHIL. WILSON takes his own gun and PHIL's from PHIL and backs down in front of settee, leaving PHIL between settee and piano. BROCKTON to TOM) Now stand away from that table! (Takes wallet from table and puts it in his pocket.)

MRS. BROCKTON. (Enters R.C., carrying burglar kit. TOM crosses to L.C.) Why, George, what was all the noise about? (Sees TOM and looks at him in amazement) You—— (Puts kit at foot of steps and comes down to R. of table.)

TOM. (Who has moved down c. and stands with his back to audience, very cool and collected) How do you do, Mrs. Brockton?

MRS. BROCKTON. Now, what's the meaning of this?

TOM. (Smiling and moving up c., facing them) I suppose you're all wondering what we're doing here? Well, it's easily explained. Miss Brockton was worried about her jewels, and sent us to fetch them.

BROCKTON and MRS. BROCKTON. (Startled) What? (VERDI stands looking at TOM with amazed expression. WILSON smiles and nods his head at BROCKTON as if to say, "I told you so.")

TOM. Luckily, we got here just in time to discover him—(Turning and indicating WILSON)—ransacking the house.

PHIL. (Taking a step down stage) Yes, in an-

other minute he'd have been on his way with them.

BROCKTON. (*Anxiously, to Tom*) You say that Ruth sent you for them?

TOM. Yes, and I'm glad for her sake that we arrived when we did!

WILSON. (*Starting for Tom*) Why, damn you, didn't you——

BROCKTON. (*Coming down c., puts up his hand, stopping WILSON*) Stay where you are. I'm taking charge of this. (*To Tom*) Strange we didn't hear you coming in. Isn't it customary on entering a house to ring the bell?

TOM. Naturally—but you see, we didn't expect to find you at home. We thought you were on your way to Chicago—— (*His voice trails off as the inexplicable circumstances of the BROCKTONS being at home dawns on him.*)

BROCKTON. (*Sees his puzzled expression and hastens to explain*) Yes, yes, so we were, but we were intercepted at Albany by a telegram saying the case has been postponed. Didn't Ruth receive our wire?

TOM. No. I'm quite sure she didn't.

BROCKTON. (*Exchanging look with MRS. BROCKTON*) Then I had better call her up at once. (*Starts down R. to phone*) What's your number? (*MRS. BROCKTON moves up. PHIL comes down to L. of TOM.*)

TOM. One-three-three.

BROCKTON. (*Taking phone*) Hello—hello—hello! (*PHIL makes a movement as if to say something and TOM stops him with a look.*) I don't seem able to get an answer—— (*Presses the hook up and down again, then looking down near floor, sees that it has been disconnected*) Why, the wires have been disconnected.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Comes down R. of table; looks accusingly at TOM*) Maybe someone cut the wires!

(TOM and PHIL turn accusingly toward WILSON.)

TOM. It wouldn't surprise me in the least. Isn't that the first thing they usually do? Before we're through, the chances are we'll find out that this man—(*Pointing to WILSON*)—is a dangerous criminal. My car is outside. Don't you think I had better go for the Police?

BROCKTON. (*Quickly crosses back to L. of table*) We won't be in any hurry about the Police. It might be wiser first to hear what Ruth has to say. (*Turns to MRS. BROCKTON*) Don't you think so, Mother?

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Shuddering. Taking a step or two down R.*) By all means. I always hate any dealings with the Police.

TOM. Perhaps you're right. He can't get away and there's no haste about deciding what to do with him. So come on, Phil. We'll drive Mrs. Brockton right over. (*He and PHIL start to go.*)

BROCKTON. Oh, before you go, hadn't you better let me have the key to the house?

TOM. (*Turning to him*) The key?

BROCKTON. If Ruth sent you for the jewels, she must have given you the key.

TOM. (*Thinking quickly; crosses to c.*) Yes, she did give it to me—but the fact is, I misplaced it. I thought I had put it in my pocket—I never missed it until I got here—— That's always the way—you never do miss a thing till you try to find it.

BROCKTON. Well, how did you get in?

TOM. I must explain. Miss Brockton had a premonition about this fellow. (*Pointing to WILSON*) And when we arrived here I saw a light through the shade and a figure moving about. Of course, I wasn't sure of what was going on, but I decided if he was up to anything I'd catch him unawares. And having misplaced the key, we came through the window.

BROCKTON. (*Sternly*) Do you often enter houses that way?

TOM. (*Indignantly*) Are you intimating——

BROCKTON. Nothing. I am intimating nothing. But the fact remains that we found you covering our butler with a gun!

TOM. I told you we caught him——

BROCKTON. Robbing the house—— That's what you said! And you overpowered him and were going to deliver him to the Police. That's all very well, but it just happens that we sent him downstairs for the jewels, and he was about to bring them to us when you intercepted him. (PHIL moves to L. of TOM.)

TOM. (*Smiling and taking a different attitude*) Oh, well! I didn't know that. Of course, that puts an entirely different complexion on it. Naturally, when I saw him taking the valuables, I jumped at conclusions and acted accordingly. (*Going to c. and turning to WILSON, who is still down L.*) Wilson, I offer an apology. And I'm glad to learn that you are a faithful and trustworthy servant. I shall report to Miss Brockton that her fears were entirely unfounded. (*Starts L.*)

BROCKTON. Now, hold on a minute. (TOM turns back at BROCKTON's voice.) Let's clear this up.

TOM. (*Coming back c.*) By all means—but isn't everything explained?

BROCKTON. (*Gruffly*) How do you explain the gag in Wilson's mouth?

TOM. (*Stalled for a moment*) The—gag——

BROCKTON. (*Sarcastically*) Did you gag him for fear that he might yell out and bring the Police or neighbors down on him?

WILSON. Maybe he is afraid I was going to bite him.

TOM. (*Getting an idea from BROCKTON's suggestion*) Why, yes, of course I wanted to prevent

him from crying out. How did I know that he didn't have confederates lurking outside? They might have come in and overpowered us. Isn't that perfectly clear?

BROCKTON. (*Looking to MRS. BROCKTON*) Hm! That does sound reasonable. (*MRS. BROCKTON nods, and he turns to TOM*) But—not that we doubt your word, Mr. Palmer—but after all, it seems very extraordinary to me that Ruth should have sent you for her jewels.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*With suspicion*) Yes, it does seem rather extraordinary.

TOM. I grant you it is unusual, and I don't blame you for your doubts. Therefore, I again volunteer to fetch Miss Brockton myself. (*Starts to go. BROCKTON'S voice stops him.*)

BROCKTON. That's very sweet of you, but we won't put you to so much trouble. You say your car is outside?

TOM. Yes, a short distance down the road. Hm! Well, Wilson is a very capable driver, and with your permission we'll borrow your car—— (*Looks at his watch*) Eleven o'clock. (*Starts down R. TOM glances quickly at PHIL, who shakes his head. MRS. BROCKTON goes to chair back of table.*) We can make it easily in five minutes.

TOM. (*Forcefully. Moving toward BROCKTON*) Now, wait a minute. I don't mind lending the use of my car, but I resent your manner of taking it. You found me here under rather peculiar circumstances, and I submitted myself to your questions. Now, you can believe me or not, just as you like, but I shall not remain under this roof another instant. And I forbid your taking my car.

BROCKTON. (*Politely, moving up R.C.*) We have one of our own, but tonight we prefer to use yours, and until we return I must insist upon the pleasure of your society.

TOM. (*Startled. Turns to BROCKTON, back to audience*) Do I understand I am virtually a prisoner?

BROCKTON. No, just a guest from whom we are most—(*Snaps his fingers as signal to WILSON*)—reluctant to part. And to prove our eagerness for your society—— (*WILSON has muffler PHIL tried to gag him with; comes up behind TOM, seizes him, throws him around R., tying his hands.*) We're going to keep you with us a little while. (*PHIL makes a start for door L.2, but seeing VERDI there with gun, turns back and starts for door R.C. MRS. BROCKTON is in the way. PHIL goes to piano. TOM is struggling with WILSON.*) Now, be a good boy, and remember we're in an awful hurry, tonight. (*Turning him toward C.*)

TOM. (*Protesting more vehemently, to BROCKTON*) Is this a joke—or what are we up against?

BROCKTON. Better submit quietly.

TOM. What's all this for, anyway?

BROCKTON. We want to hear you say in Ruth's presence that she sent you for the jewels. You don't mind confronting her, do you?

PHIL. Why, damn you—— (*Takes large vase from piano, raises it above his head and starts for BROCKTON to hit him with it. BROCKTON covers him with gun.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Look out! (*Moves chair back of table.*)

TOM. (*Stopping him*) Wait, Phil—put it down! (*PHIL stops, but still holds vase above head.*) Put it down! (*PHIL puts his hand down.*) What's the use? They've got us! (*PHIL goes up and puts vase on piano. TOM speaks to OTHERS*) If you're going all the way over to my place just to ask Miss Brockton whether she sent me or not, I can save you the trip. She doesn't know we're here!

ALL. What?

TOM. You'll get it from her, so I might as well tell you now. I tried to bluff it through as long as I thought there was a chance of making a getaway, but you're too many for us, and you control all the ammunition. We came here for the stuff—— (*ALL look at one another in surprise.*) There's half a million dollars' worth of stuff in my house, for which I'm wanted in half a dozen States. You see, I'm not trying to make it easy for myself. But I want you to consider that you haven't lost anything, and if you deliver me to the bulls it means a stretch for every job, and that means—life!

MRS. BROCKTON. Why, they're a couple of crooks! (*Sits on arm of chair R. of table. She, BROCKTON, VERDI and WILSON exchange significant looks.*)

BROCKTON. That's what they are! Now, who'd ever guessed it? (*He swells his chest and in an indignant manner walks down L. of table*) Why, the idea! The very idea! How dare you outrage our hospitality as you have done? Worming your way into our peaceful little home? (*Looks at MRS. BROCKTON.*)

WILSON. (*Looking TOM over from head to foot*) Why, hanging is too good for a guy like him!

TOM. (*Hanging his head*) Yes, I guess you're right, and you don't think any less of me than I do of myself. There's only one thing I ask. Whatever you decide to do with me, for heaven's sake do it before Miss Brockton sees me. That's the thing I can't stand—face her. (*PHIL makes a bolt for door L.2.*)

VERDI. Hey, there!

WILSON. Look out!

VERDI. (*Grabs PHIL and after a short struggle overpowers him. TOM tries to take advantage of the commotion and makes a move, but is held back*

by BROCKTON's pistol. VERDI brings PHIL down L.C., holding his hands behind him) He nearly got away that time!

WILSON. (*Coming c.*) What'll we do with him?

BROCKTON. Verdi, put him in there. (*Points to door L.I.*) Wilson, put him—(*Indicates TOM*)—in there! (*Points to door R.I.* VERDI takes PHIL off L.I and WILSON takes TOM to R.I.)

WILSON. (*To TOM*) Get in there! (*Pushes him through door. BROCKTON crosses to table.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crossing c. in front of table*) Swells! My gracious, you can't tell in this world any more who is respectable. (*Fixes veil around hat.*)

BROCKTON. That's right. Whew! (*With a sigh of relief*) But for a little while there, Nell, he had me believing that Ruth was double-crossing us. (*VERDI enters L.I.*)

WILSON. (*Enters R.I.*) Now be a good boy.

BROCKTON. Did you tie them up?

VERDI and WILSON. Yes.

BROCKTON. Well, lock the doors and give me the keys. (*They do so.*)

WILSON. Well, let's get on the job.

(*WARN Curtain.*)

BROCKTON. Yes, where's the kit?

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crossing up*) Here it is. (*Picking it up from foot of steps.*)

VERDI. (*Coming L.C.*) How do we work?

BROCKTON. The same as usual. Wilson and you on the inside—Nell and I will be the lookouts.

WILSON. (*Crossing to c.*) Swells, eh? Now we can go over to that Palmer house, clean them out and they daren't make a squeal.

BROCKTON. Not even a squeak. (*MRS. BROCKTON turns switch at R. of door R.C. LIGHTS. White and amber foots and concert border out, also brackets out, leaving just the blues in border same*

as at rise.) It certainly looks as if we were playing on the side of Providence tonight. (Takes hat from table and starts for door L.2) Go on, boys! (They exit L.2.)

(Curtain drops for a minute to denote lapse of time. While Curtain is down, CLOCK in the distance strikes twelve.)

SCENE II

Curtain rises on dark stage. After a moment the door L.2 opens cautiously, and RUTH comes on, quietly closing door. She crosses down to table R., moves chair from back of table to L. of it, puts travelling bag she is carrying on table and goes to lamp up R.; lights it. BABY SPOT covers lamp and table. RUTH comes back to table and opening bag, takes out the red morocco cases seen in the Palmer home in the Second Act. She opens the cases and admires the jewels. Her eyes drink in the beauty of the pearl necklace. Still smiling happily, she goes up to lamp, and opening door of lamp, puts her hand in for the jewels and finds it empty. She withdraws her hand and gasps, gives a startled look around the room, and running to switch, throws on the LIGHTS. White and amber foots, concert border, and brackets on wall and stand for Act. She then goes quickly down to door R.1, tries door and finds it locked. Surprised, she turns back, goes to table, puts cases back in bag, then taking keys from bag, closes it and crossing to door, unlocks it and steps inside. With a startled cry she backs from room, followed by TOM.)

RUTH. *(In a tone of surprise and amazement)*

TOM! Why—what are you doing here? (*Backs in front of table to R.C.*)

TOM. (*Standing just inside door with bowed head as if resigned to his fate*) They got me, that's all. I thought nobody was home but the butler, but your people came back unexpectedly—they're on their way to fetch you before turning me over to the Police. Now do you understand why I came in here?

RUTH. (*Backing up a step, at loss for words*) You mean you came here to rob the house?

TOM. Yes. (*Crosses in front of her to C.*)

RUTH. (*Turning and looking at lamp*) Who emptied the lamp?

TOM. Oh, they're safe enough. Your people took them along with them.

RUTH. My people?

TOM. They must have. I left them on the table. Now that you know what I came in here for—what are you going to do with me?

RUTH. (*Holds position*) What do you want me to do?

TOM. Untie my hands.

RUTH. No—oh, no—no—no. (*Shakes her head, looks slowly at TOM, who smiles at her. She pauses a moment. RUTH puts keys on table, unties his hands.*)

TOM. Thanks! That feels better. I've got a pal in there, tied up too. (*He starts toward door L.I.*)

RUTH. Please wait a moment, please.

TOM. (*Stopping and turning, crosses to L. of RUTH*) I've got to do some fast traveling tonight. (*Starts to go again.*)

RUTH. (*Stopping him*) Wait a moment, please. Isn't there anything you want to say to me?

TOM. (*Letting his eyes fall, crosses slowly to her*) What's the use? It's all over. And you'd

only despise me all the more if you heard me pleading the baby act.

RUTH. (*Pleadingly*) Haven't you one word to say in extenuation?

TOM. As my own lawyer, I don't know a decent thing I could say for my client. You see, I went wrong a year after I came out of college—gambling started me, and the first successful job I pulled off finished me. I always sort of eased my conscience by saying that when thousands have so little it's no crime to take it away from those who have so much. I sort of talked myself into believing it, too. Yes, and I'd have gone on believing and acting on it, but you—well, you sort of carried me back to the days when I was different.

RUTH. Then why did you do this tonight?

TOM. Why did I do it? Because I knew that if I didn't come in here myself, the others would have come in without me.

RUTH. (*Sitting L. of table. Turning to him*) Others?

TOM. (*Crossing to her*) Listen, Ruth. The woman you met as my mother isn't my mother. She was the cleverest confidence woman in the West. Grace isn't my sister. She and Phil, the man who acted as our butler, are married. We're all in the same combination. You probably won't understand this—— (*TOM moves to C.*)

RUTH. Oh, no!

TOM. But when you join a syndicate like ours, you cease to be a free agent. You deliver yourself into the hands of your pals. Once I got them started on this job, I had to play along with them because they hate a quitter, and any one of them could have won immunity for himself by squealing on me. But I want you to know that after I got to caring for you I stalled and stalled on this job, hoping something would happen to spoil it. And

I'd have kept on stalling, but for that Carnegie medal man mentioning the name of Ferris today— (RUTH shows interest.) Of course, the name of Ferris doesn't mean anything to you, but to us it was like a bombshell dropped out of the sky. It was up to us to clean up and clear out.

RUTH. (*Turing to Tom*) I see. That's why you were so urgent to have me go away with you tonight?

TOM. (*Coming to her*) Yes. I realized it was tonight or never.

RUTH. Tom, if I *had* said *yes*, would you really have allowed me to go with you?

TOM. (*After thinking a moment*) No, Ruth—not until you had a fair chance to reconsider. Because in that case I'd have told you everything before you started. You see, I had made up my mind to leave everything behind but you. I intended starting all over again and I would have gone straight.

RUTH. (*Her eyes gazing straight out in front as if trying to look into the future*) I wonder?

TOM. (*Moving to R.C.*) I know it's hard to believe, but I couldn't be so contemptible with you at my side.

RUTH. (*Turning to him*) But Tom—suppose that now I were to reconsider? That now I were to say "yes"?

TOM. (*Looking at her with unbelieving eyes*) After what I told you? After the way I tried to double-cross you? I'd say you were making fun of me.

RUTH. (*Rising. Pleading*) But if I convinced you that I meant it? If I had reasons of my own for wanting to go away with you? I do care for you—I do.

TOM. (*Taking her in his arms*) No, Ruth, I love you too much to let you do that. (*Holding her*

away from him and looking into her eyes) Ruth—the chances are we'll never see each other again. But I want to tell you that in a decent way you've been the biggest thing in my life.

RUTH. Thank you. *(She sighs. Taking skeleton keys from table hurriedly, crosses to door L.1. As the keys touch lock, the DOORBELL in hall rings two short and one long. RUTH pauses, and then hands keys to TOM. Door off L.2 is heard closing.)* Go in there, quick. And don't make a sound. *(TOM unlocks door L.1 and exits. RUTH starts for hall as LAZARRE enters L.2 hurriedly.)* Ira, for heaven's sake, what brings you up here at this hour of night?

LAZARRE. *(Crossing down R.C.)* You've got to hide me until I can make a getaway. They're looking for me. I've been indicted! *(Sits in chair L. of table.)*

RUTH. *(Excitedly at door L.2)* What? Indicted? Is it anything in which we're concerned?

LAZARRE. I don't know the particulars. I got a tip from a friendly court clerk while they were making out the warrant. I've been keeping out of the way, manipulating underground wires for information. All I could get was that the information came from Ferris.

RUTH. *(Rises)* Ferris?

LAZARRE. *(Crosses to c.)* Yes, I told you that wolf had his teeth set for me. *(Turning and looking around the room)* Where's the rest of the gang? *(Goes few steps down R.)*

RUTH. *(Crosses to L.C.)* They're pulling off the Palmer job now.

LAZARRE. *(Coming back to c., whining)* Oh, my God! That's what I wanted to stop! I didn't want anything pulled off till I found out what Ferris had on me.

RUTH. On you?

LAZARRE. *(Crosses down extreme R.)* Yes.

There's been a leak somewhere—treachery—
(*Turns to her. RUTH takes off cape and throws it on settee. Crosses to c.*) And if he connects me with this job—

(*The sound of a door BANGING off L.2 is heard. The L.2 door opens and WILSON, VERDI, BROCKTON and MRS. BROCKTON enter excitedly. LAZARRE is down extreme R. At sound of voices RUTH moves L. of table R. WILSON comes down C. VERDI crosses above to R. of table. MRS. BROCKTON comes down to L. of WILSON, and BROCKTON stops up L.C. and puts his hat on piano.*)

WILSON. (*Speaking as he comes and pointing to RUTH*) Oh, here you are! He didn't expect to ever catch up with you after double-crossing us!

LAZARRE. (*In alarm*) Double-cross—she?

WILSON. We got there just as arranged, but not a sign of her. Well, Tony and I decided to take a chance. We went in—we opened the safe—and found it empty. (*Starts for RUTH; makes move to choke her. Door L.1 opens and TOM and PHIL enter quickly and go in front of settee.*)

TOM. Wait a moment, there!

WILSON. (*Surprised, turning and seeing them*) Ah! Look at them! What did I tell you? They had it all fixed to make a getaway and leave us flat.

BROCKTON. (*Coming down L.C.*) Isn't it about time we were treated to an explanation? (*WILSON crosses back of table to R. of VERDI.*)

VERDI. (*R. of table*) Those jewels were not in the safe.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*c.*) Where are they?

RUTH. Where are they? (*Turns to table, opens bag and takes case containing the necklace out, opens it, and holds up the necklace*) Do you rec-

ognize them? (*The BROCKTON GANG all exchange looks of satisfaction. TOM and PHIL, startled, drop back a step.*)

PHIL. Holy murder—we've been robbed!

TOM. (*To RUTH, pointing to jewels*) How did you get them?

RUTH. Thanks to you, Mr. Palmer—once to the left, twice to the right, three times to the left and open!

TOM. (*Perplexed*) Why—what's it mean?

RUTH. (*Smiling and pointing as she speaks*) It means this isn't my mother, and this isn't my father, and we're all members of a combination, just like yours.

TOM. (*Turning to PHIL*) My God! They're a gang of crooks! (*VERDI picks up pillow from under table and puts it on chair back of table; crosses up to window, putting hat on window; holds his position. TOM, crossing to RUTH*) Why, Ruth, we're pals! There's been a mistake all around. (*BROCKTON goes up L.C.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crossing to settee L.C.*) Sure, the next thing we know we'll all be apologizing to each other.

LAZARRE. (*Down extreme R.*) Apologize—nothing! I tell you, if we don't get out of here pretty quick, Ferris will get the whole lot of us.

TOM. (*C.*) Yes, it isn't very healthy up here for us. We were figuring on getting away from here tonight.

RUTH. (*Standing beside him, R.*) So were we. Where were you going?

TOM. South America—Buenos Ayres. (*Startled look of surprise from the BROCKTON GANG.*)

RUTH. We selected Rio Janeiro. (*TOM and PHIL exchange surprised look.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Why, we'd have been neighbors again, wouldn't we?

WILSON. (*Above table at R. To TOM*) There's the door. Get out!

BROCKTON. (*Coming down L.C. and slapping TOM on shoulder*) Goodbye, Mr. Palmer.

TOM. (*Turning to BROCKTON and pointing to jewels in RUTH's hands*) What do you mean, goodbye? Say, you don't think you're going to separate me from those, do you?

BROCKTON. (*Paternaly*) My dear boy, we wouldn't think of allowing you to risk your liberty by being caught with the goods.

PHIL. (*Down extreme L.*) Well, we'll take that chance.

TOM. (*Suddenly getting an idea*) What's the good of separating? Here we are, two clever mobs. Why not follow the methods of the big financiers and consolidate? (*ALL look at one another.*) Why, a combination like ours couldn't be beaten!

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Enthusiastically*) Maybe he's right. With a couple of leaders like him and Nan, we could put all the other crooks out of the business. There wouldn't be anything left for them to steal. (*VERDI crosses to above WILSON.*)

WILSON. (*Coming down a step*) Now, listen—I go into no more combinations. (*Goes a step or two up R. BROCKTON's voice stops him.*)

BROCKTON. (*L.C., turning to WILSON and impressed with the idea*) Now, wait a minute, Steve. The tendency of modern business is toward a consolidation and the elimination of rivals. It might be to our mutual advantage to form a little trust of our own. (*Turning to LAZARRE, who is down extreme R.*) What do you think about it, Ira?

LAZARRE. (*Very much agitated*) I'm not thinking of anything but to get away from here.

RUTH. (*In back of table*) Now, listen, all of you. Let's take a sensible view of this. If we go off with their property, you couldn't blame them

for squealing and making a deal with Ferris. If they took ours, I know we'd go a long way to be avenged. Remember, Ferris would make pretty near any kind of a deal to recover this stuff. I say it's up to us to get together.

TOM. I second the motion.

VERDI. (*Up R. of table*) I am willing to consolidate.

MRS. BROCKTON. I'm solid for it.

PHIL. (*Down extreme L.*) So am I.

RUTH. Well, then, bring up some chairs, and we'll talk it over.

(*WILSON sits R. of table. TONY on the arm of WILSON'S chair. BROCKTON is in chair L. of table. RUTH stands back of table. TOM takes chair from L.C., crosses around and sits just R. of RUTH. PHIL goes to piano, takes bench and places it L. of table, just above BROCKTON. MRS. BROCKTON sits on end nearest table and PHIL on the other end.*)

LAZARRE. (*While the OTHERS are getting the chairs*) I tell you it's dangerous—it's dangerous. I refuse to participate. (*Ad lib. protests while OTHERS are being seated.*)

RUTH. (*Sits back of table*) I know, playing safe again, Ira. If you want to go, go ahead.

LAZARRE. (*Coming up to table*) Very well—give me my share.

WILSON. (*Rising and throwing the words at him*) Give you nothing! If you want to freeze yourself out, that leaves one less to divide with. (*Sits again. LAZARRE quickly gets chair from above door R.I and sits R. of table, below WILSON.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Why, it's just like a directors' meeting, isn't it?

LAZARRE. Let's get this through quickly.

RUTH. (*Rising*) You're a lawyer, Ira. What's the first step in forming a combination? (*Sits back of table.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Rising*) Yes, let's do it legally! (*She sits on bench again.*)

BROCKTON. (*Rising*) It would seem to me the first thing to do would be to ascertain what each side has to offer. (*TOM rises. Takes wallet containing STUYVESANT jewels from pocket and, opening it, places it on the table*) Now, I consider these to be worth two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. (*Pointing to the Palmer jewels*) What do you consider those to be worth?

TOM. Half a million.

BROCKTON. (*Dropping into chair again*) That makes our contribution worth seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. (*TOM and PHIL look at each other in a dazed sort of a way, and then at BROCKTON, as if they must have misunderstood. The BROCKTON GANG all wear a satisfied air.*) Now, what have you to offer?

TOM. (*Still standing*) Why, we're putting these in! (*Pointing to the Palmer jewels.*)

WILSON. (*Rising*) You're putting them in? Well, you've got a hell of a nerve! (*Pointing to Palmer jewels*) Them's ours! (*Sits. TOM registers.*)

BROCKTON. Of course they are.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Rising*) They were ours the day we went after them.

PHIL. Aw, say, cut out this kidding. (*Rising, points to jewels*) That's our stuff. (*Pulls MRS. BROCKTON out of the way and reaches for the cases*) Give it to me.

WILSON. (*As PHIL gets his hand on case, rises and covers him with gun*) Put 'em down! (*PHIL drops case.*)

RUTH. (*Rising and stopping WILSON by putting up her hand*) Wait a minute—— (*TOM sits. Af-*

ter they ALL quiet down) We'll never get anywhere if we're going to have dissension.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Pushing PHIL down on bench*) What are you trying to do, disrupt the combination already? (*Sits on bench.*)

RUTH. (*To WILSON*) From now on we'll cut out the gun-play, Steve. Give it to me. (*Holds out hand for gun.*)

STEVE. What?

BROCKTON. (*As STEVE hesitates*) Go on, Steve. (*WILSON gives her his gun, which she puts in traveling bag. She does the same with the other guns as she gets them.*)

RUTH. (*To VERDI*) Give me yours, Tony.

BROCKTON. Go on, Tony.

VERDI. (*Giving her the gun he has taken from TOM and his own*) All right.

RUTH. (*Putting out her hand to LAZARRE*) Ira—

BROCKTON. Go on, Ira. (*LAZARRE hands over his gun.*) Now, if this is going to be a gentleman's agreement, let's all act like gentlemen.

RUTH. (*Putting out her hand*) That's right, George. Give me yours. (*He hesitates.*)

WILSON. Go on, George. (*BROCKTON hands RUTH gun.*)

RUTH. (*Closing bag*) Now we'll get these out of the way. (*Pushes bag under the table. Sits.*)

BROCKTON. Now we'll proceed with the preliminaries in a decorous way.

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Indicating TOM and PHIL*) I guess that means you two thieves. (*BOTH give her an indignant look.*)

TOM. (*Rising*) What's the use of wasting time? I move that we proceed on a fifty-fifty basis. Are you all willing?

(*ALL rise and enter into a heated discussion, some*



ACT III

See page 91

taking one side and some the other. As the argument reaches its height, the sound of a DOOR BREAKING off L.2, sound of SPLITTING WOOD off L., GLASS CRASH off R., as if windows in conservatory were being broken. Window at back is smashed in.)

LAZARRE. My God—the coppers! *(There is a rush for R.C. and window. HOLMES, a powerfully built plain-clothes officer, enters L.2, followed by TWO MEN, all with guns drawn. TWO MEN come through window. THREE MEN enter R.C. They cover the entire CROWD with their guns.)*

HOLMES. Throw up your hands, and don't make any bust-away! The house is surrounded and my men have orders to shoot to kill. *(The TWO GANGS quickly lift their hands above their heads.)* Now line up over there, the whole lot of you! *(They line up over R.)*

FIRST OFFICER. *(Up C., pushing PHIL into line)* Move over there.

SECOND OFFICER. *(Down extreme R., pushing LAZARRE)* Come on!

HOLMES. Bill, Charlie, Jim, frisk them! *(The TWO MEN near R.C. touch the pockets of BROCKTON, VERDI, TOM and WILSON. The MAN down extreme R. pulls armchair out of the way.)*

LAZARRE. Keep your mouths shut, everybody. Remember, anything you say may be used against you. *(MAN extreme R. frisks him and shoves him up stage.)* *(WARN Curtain.)*

HOLMES. Oh, you know the law, don't you? *(To MAN down R.)* Mooney, guard that door! *(Pointing to door R.I. MAN steps to door, and stands in front of it. HOLMES turns to MAN down L.)* Bill, guard that door. *(Pointing to L.I. Same business as at door R.I. As HOLMES' back is turned WILSON*

lowers his hands and starts to grab jewels from table. HOLMES turns back just in time to catch him) No, you don't! *(Points gun at him)* Put 'em up! *(WILSON throws hands above head and back into line. HOLMES, with a smile of satisfaction appearing on his face, looks them over and then counts)* One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—Eight of them! *(His eyes fall upon jewels on table)* Pipe the sparklers. *(Goes to table)* Must be pretty near a million dollars' worth of stuff! *(Picks up case containing necklace, looks at it, closes it and, putting it in his pocket, sits in chair L. of table and starts drawing the other cases to him)* Well, boys, it certainly looks like a good day's work for us. *(The CROOKS, with an alarmed look at him taking jewels, crowd down stage a step. PLAIN-CLOTHES MEN all with satisfied smiles.)*

CURTAIN

Second Curtain: COMPANY.

Third Curtain: RUTH, TOM and BROCKTON.

Fourth Curtain: TOM.

Fifth Curtain: RUTH.

Sixth Curtain: RUTH and TOM.

ACT FOUR

The following morning, in the office of the National Detective Agency, New York City.

A long room with three windows at the back, facing the street and disclosing a view of the opposite buildings. Doors at Upper L. and down R. A large flat-top desk with drawers stands C., with writing-set, documents, etc., on it; also practical telephone. In upper Right-hand drawer, six pads of paper and six sharpened pencils. At back of desk a swivel chair. At each side a hard-bottom office chair; three of the same chairs along the back wall by windows. Obliqued down R. a six-foot hardwood office settee; below at extreme R., another hardwood office chair. Obliqued down L. another flat-top desk, the same as the other. Chairs at back and each side. The windows have awnings, and on the window-panes one word on each pane—"National Detective Agency"—placed on to be read from the street. The arrangement of furniture was changed after the photos were taken.

AT RISE: *The shades on the windows are drawn and the stage is dimly lighted. WILSON is in chair back of desk C., asleep; BROCKTON, L. of desk C., dozing; VERDI at R. of desk C.; MRS. BROCKTON stretched at full length on settee; LAZARRE back R. near window, standing; GRACE PALMER back L. near window, in chair; ED. PALMER at back of desk down L.; TOM PAL-*

MER *below desk L. in chair*; MRS. PALMER *above desk L. in chair*; PHIL PRESTON *sprawled on floor in front of desk L. As Curtain gets well up*, MRS. BROCKTON *shifts position, trying to get comfortable, finally turning over*. VERDI *tries to pull his feet into chair with him. They slip back to floor. LAZARRE starts pacing back and forth. TWO PLAIN-CLOTHES MEN stand at exits.*

VERDI. (*Is unable to get comfortable, and angrily straightens up, looks around with an injured air*) Holy Jupiter! I'm stiff from sitting here all night. (*Makes movement of taking exercise*) Sacre! Die Dio! (*Bangs table. ALL awaken with a start. WILSON jumps up. LAZARRE comes down R.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Say! What're you trying to do—break up the furniture?

VERDI. If they are going to keep me here any longer, I shall insist on being made comfortable. (*LAZARRE gets back to window.*)

WILSON. Sure! Ask them and maybe they'll move in a piano for you. (*VERDI moves up to window and talks to LAZARRE.*)

HOLMES. (*Enters L., smiling good-naturedly*) Good morning—everybody!

WILSON. (*Sits in chair back of desk c.*) Aw, go to hell!

HOLMES. (*Coming down L.C.*) What's the matter? Didn't you sleep well? (*To MEN at doors*) Boys, let them have a little sunlight. (*The MEN draw up shades at windows. SUNLIGHT streams through windows.*)

BROCKTON. How long are you going to keep us here? This isn't a Police Station. This is the office of a private detective agency. You haven't any right to hold us here.

HOLMES. (*Thoughtfully*) Well, maybe you're

right—but the next stop is Police Headquarters. Are you in a hurry to get there? (*Looks them ALL over questioningly.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Stretching out at full length on bench*) No, I ain't in any hurry.

VERDI. Not me. I'm all right here. (*Comes to chair R. of desk c.*)

LAZARRE. (*Coming down to back of desk*) If we're under arrest, I demand to know the nature of the charge against us.

HOLMES. (*Down L.C.*) Under arrest? Who said you were under arrest?

ALL. (*Very much surprised*) What?

HOLMES. If you'd been under arrest we'd have been compelled to deliver you to the nearest Police Station. You're down here by special invitation.

VERDI. Ain't that nice?

HOLMES. Certainly you're not under arrest.

BROCKTON. (*As a look of relief appears on OTHERS' faces, rises*) Well, in that case—if we're not pinched—come on, boys! (*ALL start to go. PHIL, putting on his overcoat, gets almost to door L. LAZARRE up at window. MRS. PALMER, GRACE and ALL up near L. door. MRS. BROCKTON moves up R.C. PALMER joins group upstage.*)

HOLMES. (*Warningly*) But—I'd advise you not to leave. (*MRS. BROCKTON crosses to front. VERDI in front of settee. LAZARRE to L. of desk c., GRACE just above him. The OTHERS are in their same positions but standing. TOM to front of desk L.*)

BROCKTON. (*Coming down L.C., highly indignant*) I demand to know by what authority my home was broken into last night and my property seized? If that was some of Ferris' work, I'll hold him personally responsible.

PALMER. (*Behind desk L., banging it with his fist*) And what right had your men to invade my home last night?

MRS. PALMER. (*To chair above desk L.*) Yes, and drag us down here?

GRACE. (*Coming down L.C.*) And treat us like a lot of common criminals? (*To chair above desk L.*)

TOM. (*Below desk L.*) And furthermore, where is Miss Brockton?

BROCKTON. Yes, where is Miss Brockton?

TOM. If she's being detained, I'll——

HOLMES. Well, what are you going to do about it? (*PHIL works slowly down L.*)

LAZARRE. (*Coming down L.C., full of importance, swelling with pride.* MRS. BROCKTON *crosses down to settee*) What are we going to do about it? Why, Habeas Corpus is my breakfast food.

HOLMES. What do you think bluffing is going to get you? Why, you haven't got a chance in the world to beat this. (*BROCKTON turns and looks inquiringly at LAZARRE, who shakes his head and goes up L.C.*)

HOLMES. (*Turns to BROCKTON*) Now, if you'd act sensible and come through like the—the other one—— (*PHIL moves to chair front of desk L. Startled looks from ALL.*)

BROCKTON. The other one? What do you mean?

HOLMES. You can bank on it, in every gang of crooks there's always one squealer.

WILSON. (*Back to desk C.*) He means Nan.

BROCKTON. Do you?

HOLMES. Well—— (*Looks at BROCKTON; lights cigar. As if he were going to tell him something else. The OTHERS look at HOLMES expectantly*) You can draw your own conclusions. (*BROCKTON crosses up R.*)

LAZARRE. (*Upper Left-hand corner of desk C., coming down*) Do you think you can put anything like that over on us? (*VERDI sits L. of settee. MRS. BROCKTON sits R. of settee.*)

BROCKTON. What do you take us for—a lot of boobs?

TOM. Why, you can't convince us that Nan's a—er—that she's lied about us.

LAZARRE. Yes, certainly. And besides, what has she to tell? We haven't done anything. We're innocent. (*Sits back of desk c.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. Sure we're innocent.

HOLMES. (*Shaking his head and looking them over*) You're sure a fine lot of innocent-looking babies, you are. (*TELEPHONE on desk rings. HOLMES takes phone; sits R. of desk. ALL watch him. His attitude changes to one of business*) Hello! Who wants Ferris? The District Attorney? All right—I'll talk to him. Hello!—Oh, how are you, Mr. Andrews? No, this is Holmes talking. I'm sorry, but Ferris is engaged. Can I take the message? Why, Ferris is taking down her statement now. No—Nan is the one. Nan, the leader of the Brockton gang. Yes, she's spilling it now. Yes, sir—we'll shoot the confession over to you as soon as she signs it. Yes, I'll tell Ferris at once. (*Hangs up receiver. During above scene EVERYONE registers every statement. HOLMES rises*) All right, Bill! (*TOM crosses to L. of desk and sits. MAN at door R. exits.*) All right, Jim! (*MAN at door L. exits. HOLMES crosses to door L. WILSON drops to extreme R. BROCKTON up R. HOLMES turns at door and sizing them all up*) Now, while I'm gone—behave! (*Exits L. ALL turn and look at one another with puzzled, alarmed expressions.*)

WILSON. (*Shaking his head*) I told you so! When a gang like ours starts to drinking tea, something awful is bound to happen.

BROCKTON. (*Crosses to R. of desk c.*) You don't believe she's squealing, do you?

TOM. (*Rises and comes c.*) Why, of course not.

It's all perfectly obvious. That telephone talk was exclusively for our benefit.

WILSON. (*Makes a gesture of dissent*) Say, listen——

TOM. (*Shakes his finger at WILSON*) You can't convince me Nan would sacrifice us to save herself.

MRS. PALMER. (*Up L., coming forward*) I ain't so sure about that.

PALMER. (*Behind desk L.; rises*) Why ain't she here with us?

PHIL. How do we know what she's doing now? (*Rising, crosses to L. of TOM*) How do we know that she ain't with Ferris right now, spilling everything to him? (*Crosses to desk L.*)

GRACE. (*Coming down between them, accusingly to TOM*) If we go up for this, it's your fault. If you hadn't stuck around to bill and coo with her, we'd have been safely away from here long ago. (*Crosses to former position; sits.*)

PHIL. (*Throwing words at TOM; moves R.*) Yes, we can blame you for this. I told you not to linger. (*Crosses L. below desk; sits.*)

MRS. PALMER. (*Standing above desk L.*) You knew Grace and Phil wanted to start housekeeping and I was going to retire with them.

VERDI. (*Mournfully, on settee down R.*) Yes—we were to retire, too! (*TOM crosses up to window.*)

WILSON. (*Extreme R. in chair, to MRS. BROCKTON, on settee*) Cut it out! We're a couple of wise mobs, we are! And with two leaders like him—(*Indicating TOM, sneeringly*) —and Nan, we could put all the other crooks out of business, eh? There wouldn't be anything left for them to steal! Hm! Why, say, we couldn't even trim each other! (*Throws his feet upon arm of settee, startling MRS. BROCKTON.*)

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Startled, looks at WILSON angrily*) Say—aw, shut up!

PALMER. (*Seated behind desk, L.*) What a sweet and amiable mood we're all in today!

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Rising*) Well, whose fault is it if Nan has squealed on us? (*Sits on settee again. TOM crosses to L. of desk c.; sits.*)

BROCKTON. (*Seated R. of desk c., turning to LAZARRE, seated behind desk*) It's your fault, Lazarre.

LAZARRE. (*Rising*) Mine?

BROCKTON. Yes—you sent her to us, you vouched for her! (*MRS. PALMER crosses up c. to window.*)

LAZARRE. (*Rising*) Now, listen, are we going to fall for that bull's frame-up? Are we going to take his word that Nan has turned traitor? Why, she couldn't be such an ingrate.

TOM. Ingrate?

LAZARRE. (*Standing behind desk, c.*) Yes, ingrate! (*MRS. PALMER sits on chair up back.*) Where do you think she was when I first met her? Locked up in the Tombs for shoplifting.

BROCKTON. (*Incredulously*) Shoplifting?

LAZARRE. Can she be so ungrateful as to forget that I took her case for a paltry fifty dollars? Can she forget the day I had her acquitted and she sat in my office, weeping tears of gratitude? And who helped her when she didn't have a nickel? Can she forget that she might have been walking the streets if I hadn't staked her? And who raised her from a piking shoplifter to going after the big swag? I put her with George and Nell and Tony. She can't forget that! No! No Bull can make me believe that she's going to bite the hand that fed her. (*Goes up back; talks to MRS. PALMER.*)

TOM. Poor girl! I hate to think of the third degree!

MRS. BROCKTON. There ought to be a law abolish-

ing that third degree! (*Throws her feet around on the settee, brushing against VERDI's trousers. VERDI rises quickly, brushes trousers, looking at her and muttering in Italian; sits on arm of settee. MRS. BROCKTON lies down on settee, grinning.*)

TOM. (*Slapping his hand on desk, rising*) Come on, let's buck up! What's the use of crossing bridges before we get to them? (*Crosses to front of desk L. PALMER joins MRS. PALMER back, and PHIL crosses to chair back of desk L. GRACE crosses up and joins group back.*)

LAZARRE. (*Coming to front of desk c.*) Yes, it's more than an even chance that we'll beat this case, and if we all stand pat we haven't played our trump card yet.

WILSON. (*Sarcastically*) Listen, if you've got anything bigger than a deuce in the hole, I'd like to see it.

LAZARRE. (*Going toward him*) Well, here's our ace. (*TOM sits on desk L. LAZARRE looks around room. EVERYONE is now very much interested, hopeful that he has found a way out. To TOM*) Are you sure that all your stuff was broken up and the stones reset?

TOM. Positive. Not a single stone was left in its old setting.

LAZARRE. Good! How about yours?

BROCKTON. Every last one of them was reset.

LAZARRE. (*Joyously*) That's our salvation! (*VERDI rises. ALL look at LAZARRE, puzzled.*)

BROCKTON. What do you mean? (*TOM crosses to L.C.*)

LAZARRE. (*c., turning first to one faction, then to the other*) Don't you see? Ferris represents the burglary insurance companies. Now, what's worrying the companies most? How to recover the property on which they must have paid out close to a million dollars. How many of the original own-



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ers do you think will recognize their stuff in the new settings? Not five percent of them. That's why Ferris wants us to think Nan has squealed. Now, for heaven's sake, everyone sit tight and the companies will be more than willing to make terms with us. I'll do all the talking.

WILSON. Well, what do you think you have been doing? (*PHIL goes up to window L. VERDI to window R.*)

LAZARRE. (*Crosses toward WILSON*) Now, another thing! We've got to get to Nan—and get to her quick! They'll resort to anything to break her down. But if she'll hold out—— (*The door L. opens and RUTH enters.*)

PHIL. (*Seeing RUTH approaching through door L.*) Sssh!—Here's Nan! (*ALL excepting WILSON rise. TOM moves up C.*)

(*RUTH looks pale, worn and uneasy. She is followed on by TWO PLAIN-CLOTHES MEN, who take positions one at each side of door. As she passes TOM he tries to catch her eye, but she lets hers drop to the floor. He slowly shakes his head and crosses R. She stops at upstage corner of desk L. HOLMES enters with an air of importance. He carries a large legal-looking document in his hand, open, glancing at it as he enters. VERDI crosses to arm of settee and sits.*)

HOLMES. Now will you identify them? (*RUTH nods affirmatively.*) I'll call them off in the order in which they are named in this confession.

ALL. What?

HOLMES. (*Reading from confession*) Ira Lazarre!

RUTH. (*Indicates each one by pointing as name is called*) Ira Lazarre! (*TOM crosses up to extreme R., near cabinet.*)

LAZARRE. (*Crossing toward RUTH*) It's a lie! I'm innocent. I tell you I'm innocent!

HOLMES. (*To MEN at door*) Take him away. (*MAN comes forward and grabs IRA and throws him to the other MAN.*)

LAZARRE. Not a word—don't say a word—remember, they'll use it against you! (*MAN at door is struggling with IRA and hustles him out as he says the last word of speech.*)

HOLMES. Mrs. Nellie Brockton!

RUTH. Nellie!

MRS. BROCKTON. (*Crossing in front of desk to her*) After all we did for you! Taking you into our home and making you feel like one of us! You repay us by turning squealer! You're a—well, that's what you are! (*Exits L.*)

HOLMES. George Brockton!

RUTH. George Brockton!

BROCKTON. (*Buttons his coat, takes hat from desk and is very dignified in manner; crosses to RUTH, stops and says very quietly*) You're not fit to associate with honest crooks. (*Exits L.*)

HOLMES. Mrs. Palmer and Grace Palmer! (*RUTH indicates them.*)

MRS. PALMER. Come on, Grace. (*Starts for exit. As she passes RUTH*) You shameful little hussy! (*Exits L.*)

GRACE. (*As she passes RUTH*) You dirty little cat! (*Exits L.*)

HOLMES. Ed Palmer!

RUTH. Ed Palmer! (*PALMER draws himself up, gives RUTH a look of scorn, and exits L.*)

HOLMES. Antonio Verdi!

RUTH. Tony!

VERDI. (*Has been scared to death ever since the identifications started, tries to get to his feet. He is trembling all over with anger and fear, and as he rises his legs tremble so he can hardly stand. He*

raises trembling hands to arrange his necktie. Beads of perspiration stand out on his forehead. He tries to pull himself together and put on a bold front; crosses behind desk. As he reaches chair at c. he almost collapses, but grabbing the back of the chair, he steadies himself, then crosses to RUTH, straightens up, looks as if he were going to explode; shakes his finger at her) Tra—va—Triche—Bah! (Exits L.)

HOLMES. Phil Preston! *(Before she has a chance to identify him, PHIL rushes out L. PLAIN-CLOTHES MAN crosses to back of desk c.)* Steve Wilson!

RUTH. Steve!

WILSON. *(Rises, in a very penitent and humble manner, starts toward her, crossing below desk. TOM, sensing his purpose, starts slowly down to desk c.)* Nan, don't be hard on a guy. Why, we've been pals for five months. Why did you—— *(As he gets near her he makes a leap, trying to get her by the throat. HOLMES gets between them just in time, grabbing him and holding back with his R. arm. HOLMES is facing WILSON, his back to NAN, who has dropped below desk L. WILSON is struggling to get to her)* By God! I'd swing to get you! *(HOLMES throws him around upstage and the Two PLAIN-CLOTHES MEN grab him and start for exit, WILSON struggling)* Hey, cut that rough stuff! What's the matter with you? Now, cut it out, I tell you—— Let me get my collar and necktie on! *(They hustle him out.)*

HOLMES. *(Reading)* Tom Palmer!

RUTH. *(Looking at TOM with a sigh)* I'd like to speak to Tom Palmer.

TOM. *(Crossing to HOLMES)* I want to see Ferris.

HOLMES. *(Looking him over)* You do, eh? Well, you stay here. *(Starts to exit.)*

TOM. (*Looking at RUTH*) I would rather wait somewhere else.

HOLMES. (*Turning to him, gruffly*) You stay here. (*Exits L. TOM crosses down L.C. to RUTH. She turns and their eyes meet. She slowly lets hers fall to the floor.*)

TOM. Ruth, how could you? I wouldn't have cared if it had been anyone but you! God, I'm disappointed! (*Shaking his head.*)

RUTH. (*Raising her head and looking at him*) Tom, why did you ask to see Ferris?

TOM. Because I thought I might be able to make a deal with him that would help the others. I thought if he was on that boat he might feel kindly toward me. I want to see him, talk to him, and tell him if he would let up a bit—— (*Sits R. of desk*) —on the others, I'd take the plea, and they could hand me the limit. (*RUTH, deeply affected, comes to his side, puts out her hand, touches his head, then draws it back.*) You see, I'd made up my mind yesterday if it ever came to a showdown, I'd do everything I could to make it easy for them—and you.

RUTH. I had made up my mind, too, that I was going to do everything I could to make it easy for them—and you.

TOM. (*Rising and turning to her*) You mean that you sacrificed yourself for us?

RUTH. Don't you see it even now?

TOM. See what?

RUTH. Everything that has happened since the first day I met you? The series of events leading up to the arrest? That the raid should have taken place just after I had relieved you all of your guns?

TOM. (*Mentally noting every statement she makes*) It means that you've been working for Ferris all the time?

RUTH. No, it means that I'm in business for myself.

TOM. (*Startled*) Yourself? Then you're——

RUTH. Ferris.

TOM. (*Bitterly*) Of course—of course. By Jove! it all comes back to me now. Everything you did! All you said was merely to ensnare me and to trap the others. I suppose we'll all soon be looking out from behind the bars and find you laughing at us down the corridor. It will bring a lot of glory to you, getting us twenty years apiece, so it makes no difference what we think of you. But I want to say this: You've stooped pretty low, lower than any of us would have done, and even a crook can feel contempt for—— (*Crosses to front of desk c.*)

RUTH. (*Pleadingly*) Tom——

TOM. (*Crossing to R. of desk c.*) Yes, it was contemptible for you to do it. (*Turns and looks at her*) Gee! I'd have gone through for you.

RUTH. Yes, and I'm going through for you!

TOM. What do you mean?

RUTH. (*Indicating chair R. of desk c.*) Sit down, please. (*TOM drops in chair.*) Listen, Tom: I started out on this case with every intention of going through. I didn't seek the job. The job sought me. (*Goes around to back of desk c.; takes off hat; sits*) I was a reporter, getting thirty dollars a week. My work on a couple of criminal cases attracted the attention of one of the burglary insurance companies. They offered me a position in their investigating department at seventy-five dollars a week. Well, I made good. I made so good that I decided to go into business for myself. I organized the different burglary companies into a mutual protective association and got their business. Getting the small-fry burglars was easy enough, and I decided to go after the high-class mobs. You wonder how I got on the inside? Through Ira

Lazarre! Then I stumbled across you—so I decided to kill two birds with a single stone. Oh, I know what you're thinking—and you're right. I took advantage of the love you offered me, and what happened? I owe my life to you. But even more than that—something inside of me changed. I began to look at things from a new angle—the human angle. Do you imagine after what I saw you do aboard that boat that I could be the one to destroy you? Do you think, in staying on the job, I was moved by loyalty to my clients or the District Attorney? The way I felt toward you, Tom, I could have thrown them over like that—Well, if I could have abandoned the job without hurting everyone concerned, I'd have done so long ago. But I knew that, if I quit, somebody else would take my place, and perhaps make it harder for you. You see, once I got this thing started, I ceased to be a free agent. And I continued—well, because you'd grown into my life. I wanted to protect you—I wanted to be near you. I thought of the future—of your future—of our future—I saw the *better* side of you—and I wanted to help you find yourself.

TOM. Then, in Heaven's name, why didn't you tell me this before?

RUTH. (*Looking up into his eyes*) Because I wanted you to come to me—frankly, openly and aboveboard.

HOLMES. (*Enters L.*) Oh, Chief——

RUTH. (*Turning to him*) Yes?

HOLMES. (*With a wise smile*) The rest of the gang want to see Ferris.

RUTH. All right—show them in! (*Rises. HOLMES exits.*)

TOM. (*Rises; crosses to front of desk*) Well, Ruth, I'm licked! What are you going to do with me?

RUTH. (*Crosses to front of desk L., turning to him*) Tom, I'm going to see that you live up to my expectations of you.

TOM. (*Taking step toward her*) You mean you're going to give me a chance to go straight?

RUTH. I mean, I'm not going to give you a chance to do anything else. You see, I need you now.

TOM. You mean, I've still got a chance of winning you?

RUTH. (*Going to him*) Tom, some women can only love once. I'm one of that kind. (*TOM takes RUTH in his arms.*)

HOLMES. (*Enters L.*) Come in here, the lot of you!

(LAZARRE enters first, coming down L.C. to lower end of desk L. BROCKTON next, coming down R. of LAZARRE. WILSON next, to chair down extreme R. VERDI next, to down-stage end of settee. MRS. BROCKTON in front of settee at upstage end. PALMER, MRS. PALMER and GRACE in front of the three chairs along back wall. PHIL comes down back of desk L.)

LAZARRE. I want to see Ferris.

BROCKTON. Yes, where is Ferris?

RUTH. (*Turning and taking a step toward them*) Boys, it seems to me for a long time you've wanted to see Ferris.

TOM. (*Coming to RUTH*) Boys, let me introduce the head of the National Detective Agency—Miss Ruth Ferris.

ALL. (*Very much startled, incredulously*) What?

MRS. BROCKTON. My Gawd!

BROCKTON. (*Looking at RUTH*) I don't believe it!

HOLMES. (*Coming to upper L. hand corner of*

desk, c.) She's giving it to you straight now. She's Ferris. (*Pointing to RUTH.*)

BROCKTON. (*Turning to LAZARRE*) Well, if she's Ferris, how did you have her acquitted of shop-lifting?

LAZARRE. I was her lawyer.

RUTH. (*Leaning against desk, c.)* Now, Ira, don't pat yourself on the back for having me acquitted. You see, it was all a frame-up to land you. I had myself arrested just for the pleasure of engaging you as my lawyer.

LAZARRE. Oh!

RUTH. It was all fixed for the District Attorney to let you have me acquitted, because then you'd think me a clever enough crook to use me—and you did! Well, you put me right on the inside of the Stuyvesant job, and while waiting to land you I ran across the Palmers. That's all there is to it. (*Laughing*) Oh, Ira, I must say you did play it pretty safe!

LAZARRE. Yes, it looks it.

BROCKTON. (*Looking at LAZARRE in disgust*) You're a fine lawyer, you are.

WILSON. (*Down R., shaking his head*) I told you she was too damned clever for us!

LAZARRE. (*Stepping forward*) Well, if you're Ferris, I've a proposition to make.

RUTH. I think I know your proposition, Ira. Sit down, everybody. (*ALL sit. BROCKTON above desk L., LAZARRE below, TOM at R. of desk c., OTHERS in positions they took on entrance. RUTH back of desk c.)* Now, boys, you want to make restitution of the stolen property in exchange for a light sentence? (*ALL voice assent.*) Well, I accept your proposition. And I'm going to do more for you than that— (*Pointing to TOM*) You can thank him for it. I'm going to put you all to work!



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ACT IV

ALL. (*Disappointed*) Work? (*Sighing*) It's come at last!

WILSON. (*Rising, to HOLMES*) Call the wagon, Chief, and take me away. (*Drops into chair again.*)

RUTH. Boys, for a long time you've been preying on society. Now I'm going to give you a chance to come in here and protect society. But I want to tell you this: The first time you hear of a job that's being pulled off and fail to report it, or double-cross me on any case you're working on, it means *twenty years*!

VERDI. (*As ALL gasp and shift positions*) Accidentie!

RUTH. Now it's up to you!

MRS. BROCKTON. Why, she's going to turn us all into detectives.

BROCKTON. (*With a smile*) Well, we've had a good education for the job!

RUTH. Bill, distribute the writing materials. (*To PLAIN-CLOTHES MAN R. HOLMES and MAN take pads and pencils from drawer of desk c. and distribute to all but TOM.*) Now go ahead and write your confessions.

LAZARRE. (*Rises*) What do you intend to do with these confessions? (*Sits.*)

RUTH. Nothing—as long as you remain on the square with me.

HOLMES. (*Up L.*) Oh, Chief, I forgot to mention it—there's a man from the Carnegie Hero Medal Foundation waiting outside. He wants to see you.

RUTH. I'll see him in a minute. (*HOLMES starts to go. RUTH stops him.*) Oh, by the way, Holmes, you might send an item to the newspapers that the hero of the *Termania* disaster has acquired an interest in our agency. (*Starts of surprise from EVERYONE. RUTH turns to TOM*) Isn't that so, Tom?

TOM. (*Reaching across desk and taking her hand*) If you say so, Ruth. (HOLMES, *with a dazed expression, shakes his head and exits L. The OTHERS sit, dazed, as if not knowing what to do. When all is quiet:*)

RUTH. (*After a long pause, during which she talks to TOM, looks around and sees they are not writing*) Come, come! Busy, everybody, with the confessions—— (*They ALL look resentfully at her*) Remember, it's twenty years, or report at this agency for work every morning. Which is it?

WILSON. (*Scratching his head, looks puzzled, turns to VERDI*) Tony, how many d's in murder? (*After laugh starts, ALL start to write.*)

CURTAIN

PROPERTY PLOT

ACT I

Carpet.

Baby grand piano—bench and drape.

Large settee.

Three 18-inch stands.

One 24-inch stand.

Four straight-backed chairs.

One large armchair.

Large round table with drawer.

Twelve books.

Pair book ends.

Pack of playing-cards.

Two match safes with ash trays.

Large bronze cigarette box (filled).

"Police Gazette."

Telephone book.

Four sofa pillows.

Twelve plants and palms in bloom.

Silver hand mirror.

Large black wallet for jewels.

Stuyvesant collection of jewels, assorted.

Mesh bag.

Side Properties

Door slam, L.2.

Tea cart, L.2.

On the tea cart: White cloth, silver teapot,
sugar bowl, cream pitcher, seven afternoon tea-

cups and saucers, seven teaspoons, plate of sliced lemon, plate of small cakes, plate of dainty sandwiches, silver call bell.

Tray with five filled whiskey glasses, L.2.
Silver card salver, L.2.

Hand Properties

Cigar, revolver, telegram—Wilson.
Pipe, tobacco, book, skeleton keys—Brockton.
Large bouquet garden flowers, telegram—Ruth.
Dictagraph, wallet, stage money—Lazarre.

ACT II

Carpet.
Curtains and drapes for windows.
Baby grand piano and drape.
Piano bench.
Large settee.
Library table.
Two large armchairs.
One large rocker.
One tapestry-covered window-seat.
Small settee for front of table without back.
Three pedestals.
One 24-inch table.
Two straight-backed chairs.
Dark mantelpiece.
Two large bronze figures.
One pair antique earthen vases.
One pair antique bronze vases.
Floral box to fit fireplace.
Large antique bronze bowl for flowers on piano.
Flowers for all vases.
Drape for table.
Practical safe to stand back of panel in back wall.

Documents to dress safe.
Four red Morocco jewel cases.
Assorted collection of jewels.
Pearl and diamond collarette.
Writing-set for table.
Water carafe and two glasses on tray.
Fancy cigarette box (large), (filled).
Set of nice books and book ends.
Two black rubber penholders.
One set blue prints, plans of the house.
Large antique bronze clock for mantel.
Practical piano off R.2E.

Hand Properties

Small jewel case with two pieces of jewelry (Ruth).
Mesh bag used in Act I. Revolver (Wilson).
Silver card salver and card (Phil).

ACT III

Hand Properties

Burglar kit for Mrs. Brockton.
Keys in doors R. and L. down stage.
Revolvers for Tom, Phil, Wilson, Verdi, Brockton, Lazarre, Holmes and seven extra men.
They must be modern automatics.
Long muffler for Phil, to use as gag.
Black traveling bag with all the Palmer jewels in red morocco cases that were used in Act II in it, and skeleton keys from Act I for Ruth.
Stuyvesant jewels in lamp, same as in Act I.
Chime for clock strike R.1E.
Wood crashes R. and L. side of stage, also soap boxes and axes.

Glass crashes at windows c. and R. and L. sides of stage.

Soap box and chisel at window c. for Phil.

Two small pieces of thin wood to break at window c.

ACT IV

Two large flat-top desks with drawers.

Six hardwood arm office chairs.

Two straight-back hardwood chairs.

Large hardwood office settee with arms.

Six writing pads and six sharpened pencils in top drawer of each desk.

Two writing pads for desks.

Documents, etc., to dress.

Two manuscript baskets.

Two wastepaper baskets.

Large rug for floor.

Practical shades on windows.

Hand Properties

Legal document for Holmes.

ELECTRICAL PLOT

ACT I

Four practical brackets on walls.

Large antique lamp with trap door in bowl and vault inside large enough to hold jewel wallet.

Practical doorbell, L.2.

Four two-light amber strips over doors.

Telephone.

Two 1000-Watt bunches.

During action of play, use amber, white and blue in your foots and borders.

It is late in the afternoon—amber and white foots and border on at rise.

No change of lights during act.

ACT II

Amber foots and concert border two-thirds on.

Last border blue.

Two 1000-watt bunches at window R.C. (blue).

One 1000-watt bunch at window left (blue).

Practical piano lamp.

Practical small lamp on table L.C.

Practical table lamp on table up L. (large).

Two light amber strips over doors.

Large practical alarm gong to ring off L.

ACT III

Antique lamp used in Act I (practical).

Blue, amber and white in concert and last border.

Blues on at rise. White and amber in foots and concert work on cues.

Two 1000-watt bunches (blue) at window, back.
Baby spot R.1E. To work on table R. at cues. (Amber.)

Baby spot L.2E. in hallway. (Amber.)

Baby spot R.2E. To cover antique lamp. At cues.

Pocket flash lamps for Tom, Verdi and Phil.

ACT IV

Amber and white foots and borders.

Two light amber strips over doors R.1E. and L.2E.

Three 1000-watt bunches hung over awnings at window—amber.

Three 1000-watt bunches flat on floor, throwing against drop (blue).

Four brackets on walls of set (not practical).

Practical telephone on desk, center, with push button to ring off Left.

Foots and borders one-third on at rise, up to full as shades are drawn. All other lights full on at rise.

Stands for the Act.

"CHEATING CHEATERS"

PUBLICITY THROUGH YOUR LOCAL PAPERS

The press can be an immense help in giving publicity to your productions. In this belief we submit a number of suggested press notes which may be used either as they stand or changed to suit your own ideas and submitted to the local press.

In all classes of plays produced on the stage there are certain ones that stand out preëminent as the years go on. At the head of the class known as "mystery plays" stands "Cheating Cheaters," by Max Marcin. With a strong and logical melodramatic basis, this play fairly teems with suspense, thrills and hearty laughter—and most important of all—a charming love story. The characters are varied and interesting and the settings aristocratic.

This play added greatly to the artistic reputations of the all-star cast which played it in New York and throughout the country.

It has been held in manuscript for a long time, but Samuel French finally secured the author's consent to publish his famous play for the convenience of the amateurs of America.

The _____ Players will present "Cheating Cheaters" at _____ Theatre on _____ evening. This will be its first production in this city by local talent and theatregoers can look forward to an evening of unbounded pleasure.

Max Marcin, the author of "Cheating Cheaters," is a master in the field of mystery drama. "The House of Years," "The Eyes of Youth," "The Woman In Room 13," "Three Live Ghosts," and "Silence" are all notable examples from his prolific pen—but "Cheating Cheaters" is his masterpiece.

Here is a play that defies solution until the very last moment and yet it is done in a most logical and intriguing manner.

Thrill is piled upon thrill and laugh upon laugh—and there are moving interludes during which a beautiful and romantic love story is unfolded.

To employ these ingredients in their proper and artistic proportion requires a master-mind and hand, and Mr. Marcin has abundantly proven that he possesses both in a high degree.

You will find it immensely worth your while to see "Cheating Cheaters" when the _____ Players present this thrilling and laughable comedy-drama at _____ Theatre on _____ evening.

SYNOPSIS

The action takes place in two country homes about five miles apart which have been specially rented by two gangs of crooks for the successful prosecution of the scheme of robbery designed against the other. Here is a touch of novelty when the two gangs recognize each other's true profession and proceed to pool their assets and form a joint thieves' corporation.

Throughout the proceedings we get fugitive evidence of a universally feared detective, a mysterious individual who is reserved for one of the surprises of the play. Between Nan and Tom a mutual admiration has developed, neither knowing

the other's antecedents or history. Nan saw Tom aboard the mined ship, risking his life to save others, and Tom has discovered an irresistible charm in Nan; but while it is love at sight, she does not surrender immediately.

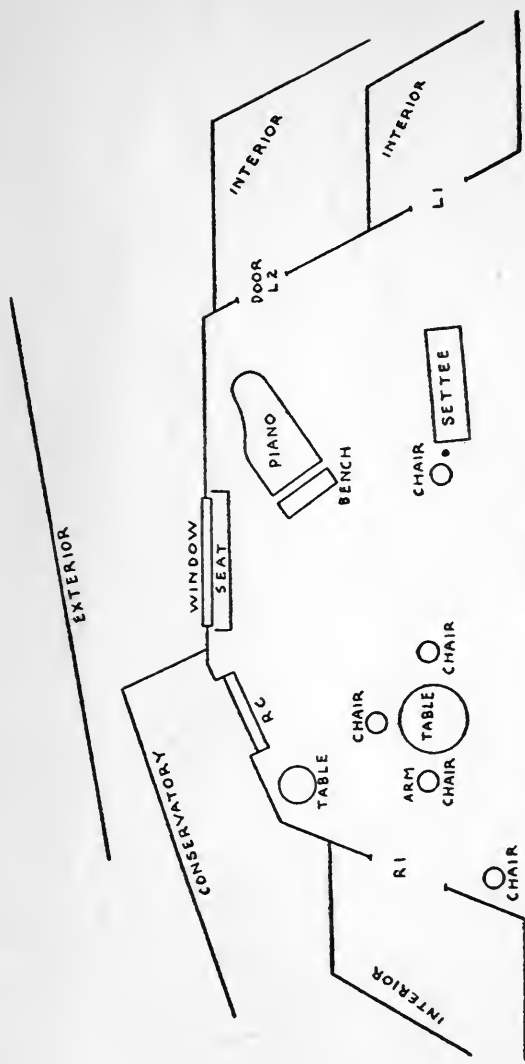
In due time both gangs are trapped by Nan, who turns out to be the mysterious detective. But her love for Tom starts him off on the road to better things.

"Cheating Cheaters," the crook play in four surprise packets, is the play of all plays this season that makes us want to inquire just what elements a crook play must possess in order to be successful. Mr. Marcin, who wrote the play, has taken good old-fashioned melodrama for his main ingredient, has added thrill and heart interest, and gives us a finished offering, a crook play modelled on the 1932 model. We have had countless crooks of the blackest, most desperate calibre. We have thrilled before to the doings of the clever outlaw who would rather steal than be honest, because it is more worth while to take the risk, but never in our lives have we met desperate crooks, even murderous crooks, who have been made fools of by any but the legitimate police force. In "Cheating Cheaters" we match crooks against crooks. Both are ignorant of the final outcome and the audience in the meantime is held spellbound by one of the nicest stage devices employed in some time.

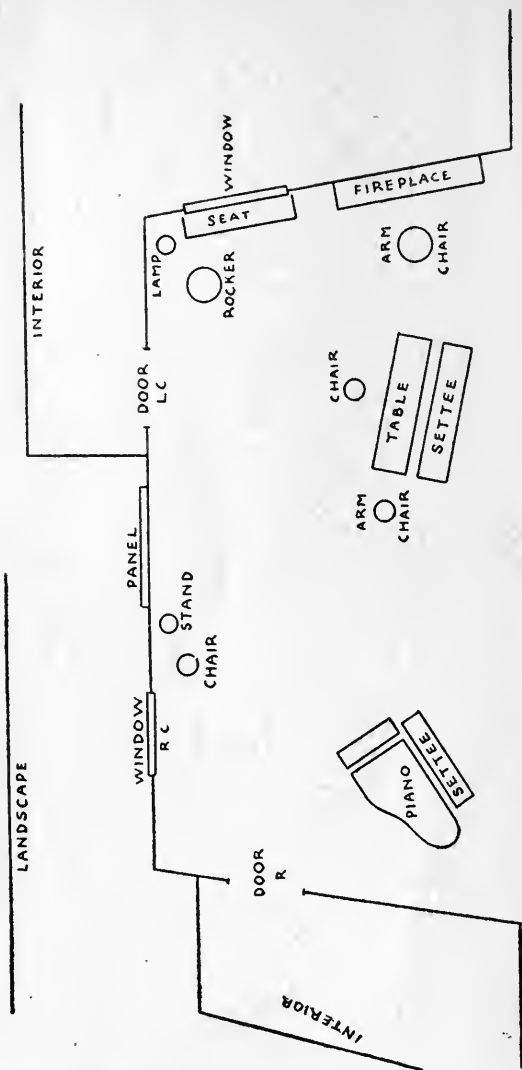
All plays of this kind must have a certain similarity. There must always be clever scoundrels who thrill with their nonchalance and easy acceptance of the desperate roles they are playing; there are always stolen jewels, and as a general rule there is some extreme member of the Police Department on the track of the missing valuables. And, knowing

this, we know in a measure what to expect and we like every bit of it, from the playing searchlights to the moment of the discovery, when we hold our breath and say involuntarily, "I wish they could have gotten away with it."

"Cheating Cheaters" is different, because it combines farce successfully with melodrama. Never have we thrilled one moment and laughed so the next. Never have we allowed our imagination such full play, only to bring them up with a sudden bang against the reality of laughable situations. If Mr. Marcin had made his new crook play entirely serious, as was "Kick In," or some of the successful crook plays of the past, he would have missed the point entirely, but the novelty of his newest invention to obtain interest as well as create atmosphere has entirely appealed to this season's theatregoers, and we have one of the greatest successes of the season in this play of crook propensities, crook characters and crook life.

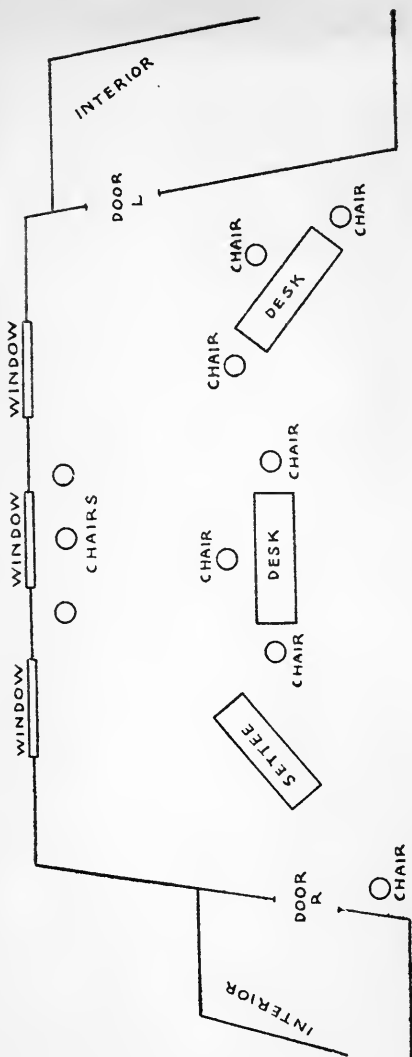


SCENE DESIGN ACTS 1 & 3
"CHEATING CHEATERS"



SCENE DESIGN ACT 2
"CHEATING CHEATERS"

STREET



SCENE DESIGN ACT 4
"CHEATING CHEATERS"

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ARE YOU A MASON?

Farce in 3 acts. By Leo Ditrichstein. 7 males, 7 females. Modern costumes. Plays 2¼ hours. 1 interior.

"Are You a Mason?" is one of those delightful farces like "Charley's Aunt" that are always fresh. "A mother and a daughter," says the critic of the New York *Herald*, "had husbands who account for absences from the joint household on frequent evenings, falsely pretending to be Masons. The men do not know each other's duplicity, and each tells his wife of having advanced to leadership in his lodge. The older woman was so well pleased with her husband's supposed distinction in the order that she made him promise to put up the name of a visiting friend for membership. Further perplexity over the principal liar arose when a suitor for his second daughter's hand proved to be a real Mason. . . . To tell the story of the play would require volumes, its complications are so numerous. It is a house of cards. One card wrongly placed and the whole thing would collapse. But it stands, an example of remarkable ingenuity. You wonder at the end of the first act how the fun can be kept up on such a slender foundation. But it continues and grows to the last curtain." One of the most hilariously amusing farces ever written, especially suited to schools and Masonic Lodges. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

KEMPY

A delightful comedy in 3 acts. By J. C. Nugent and Elliott Nugent. 4 males, 4 females. 1 interior throughout. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

No wonder "Kempy" has been such a tremendous hit in New York, Chicago—wherever it has played. It snaps with wit and humor of the most delightful kind. It's electric. It's small-town folk perfectly pictured. Full of types of varied sorts, each one done to a turn and served with zestful sauce. An ideal entertainment for amusement purposes. The story is about a high-falutin' daughter who in a fit of pique marries the young plumber-architect, who comes to fix the water pipes, just because he "understands" her, having read her book and having sworn to marry the authoress. But in that story lies all the humor that kept the audience laughing every second of every act. Of course there are lots of ramifications, each of which bears its own brand of laughter-making potentials. But the plot and the story are not the main things. There is, for instance, the work of the company. The fun growing out of this family mixup is lively and clean. (Royalty, twenty-five dollars.) Price, 75 Cents.

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